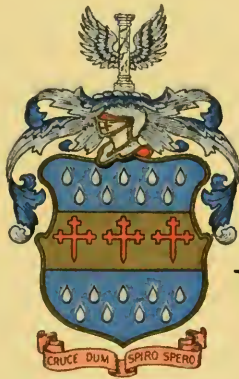




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POEMS AND LITERARY PROSE

OF

ALEXANDER WILSON.

VOL. I.—PROSE.







ALEXANDER WILSON.

*engraved by W. J. Flax, after the original by James O'Hare*

*Alexander Gardner, Publisher*

THE  
POEMS AND LITERARY PROSE

OF  
ALEXANDER WILSON,  
THE AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGIST.

FOR THE FIRST TIME FULLY COLLECTED AND COMPARED WITH THE ORIGINAL AND  
EARLY EDITIONS, MSS., ETC.

EDITED,

WITH MEMORIAL-INTRODUCTION, ESSAY, NOTES, ILLUSTRATIONS,  
AND GLOSSARY,

BY THE

REV. ALEXANDER B. GROSART,  
*Editor of "The Fuller Worthies' Library," &c., &c.*

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VOL. I.—PROSE.

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WITH PORTRAIT, ILLUSTRATIONS, &c.

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PAISLEY: ALEX. GARDNER.

1876.



## Preface.

---

IT is a somewhat remarkable fact that with the exception of Allan Ramsay, Fergusson, and Burns, none of our Scottish vernacular poets has been so continuously kept 'in print' as ALEXANDER WILSON. Since the publication by himself of the thin volume of 1790, and its re-issue in 1791, there never has been a time when his Poems were not obtainable through the ordinary channels. This is more than can be said of DUNBAR, HENRYSON, GAVIN DOUGLAS, MONTGOMERY, ALEXANDER SCOT, or DRUMMOND, earlier; or of MESTON, ROSS, SKINNER, MACNEIL, BRUCE, or TANNAHILL, later, or even more recently of WILLIAM TENNANT, or ROBERT NICOLL. One must attribute this vitality of interest in Poetry that is not in itself of the highest, or the greatest work or workmanship of its Author, to the ever-widening and deepening fame of the "Ornithology," and to the multiplied Lives of him. As noted in the Memorial-Introduction (page xvii.) there have been seven full Lives, besides as many more, and indeed twice as many more, lesser notices, *e. g.* :—

1. Account of Life and Writings, prefixed to "Poems": Paisley, 1816: pp. ix.-lxxxii. 12mo. (Chiefly by Thomas Crichton.)
- 1.\* Biographical Sketches of the late Alexander Wilson. . . . Communicated in a Series of Letters to a Young Friend: Paisley, 1819: pp. 88. 8vo. (By Thomas Crichton.)

Originally published in the *Weavers' Magazine and Literary Companion*, Vol. II., Paisley, 1819 : pp. 97-107 ; 145-160 ; 193-218 ; 241-72 ; 286-7.)

2. Sketch of the Life of Alexander Wilson, Author of the "American Ornithology." By George Ord, F.L.S., &c. : Philadelphia, 1828. 8vo. Page excix. (Preceded by a Memoir in the closing volume of the "Ornithology," by Ord.)
  3. Life by Sir William Jardine, Bart., in Vol. I. of his and Prince Charles L. Bonaparte's edition of the "American Ornithology" (3 vols., 8vo., 1829-36), pp. xlii.-lxxxvi.
- \*.\* This edition of the "Ornithology" has just been reproduced by Chatto and Windus. The large paper copies are superb books.
4. Life by the Rev. Dr. William M. Hetherington in Vol. I. of Professor Jamieson's edition of the "American Ornithology" (4 vols., 12mo., 1831), pp. xiii.-lxxxvi.
  5. Prefixed to the "Poetical Works of Alexander Wilson ; also, his Miscellaneous Prose Writings, Journals, Letters, Essays, etc., now first collected : illustrated by Critical and Explanatory Notes," where it is described as "An Extended Memoir of his Life and Writing." Belfast, 1845 ; cr. 8vo. ; pp. xxxviii. (Anonymous.)
  6. The Library of American Biography. Conducted by Jared Sparks. Vol. II. New York (Harpers), 1851. Life of Alexander Wilson, by W. B. O. Peabody, pp. 169.
  7. Difficulties Overcome : Scenes in the Life of Alexander Wilson, the Ornithologist. By C. Lucy Brightwell, author of "Heroes of the Laboratory." London, 1861. 12mo. Pp. iv. and 160.



In the preparation of the present edition of the Poems, I have, in every case, reproduced the original text from the editions of 1790 and 1791, and contemporary British and American periodicals and broad-sheets (*e. g.*, "Watty and Meg" and "The Shark, or Lang Mills Detected," and those of the same group, appeared as chapbooks or broad-sheets). This recurrence to the Author's own text has enabled me to correct very many mistakes in every way of the editions of 1814 and 1816, and onward to 1845, and all. All honour is due to the good and venerable THOMAS CRICHTON for his services as Biographer, and in part, Editor of the Poems of 1816. He cherished the memory of his friend WILSON with peculiar tenderness; and now, his own is a pleasant one to those who can still recall him. The 1845 edition was a well-meant effort to give a complete edition; but its anonymous Editor must have been scantily furnished, as his errors literally swarm, and are of the most elementary and illiterate kind. But, however uncritical, thanks must be tendered for the Belfast edition.

As our 'Contents' markings show, there are very considerable and important additions to the Poems. With reference to the largest poetical addition, *viz.*, "The Spouter," it authenticates itself; but it may be stated that it is No. 13 of the "List of Pieces written by Mr. Alexander Wilson, now in Philadelphia," printed in the *Paisley Repository*, 1810, (No. 21). It was first published in a limited edition in 1847 at Belfast. Those from the American periodicals and newspapers, and from the MSS. deposited in the Paisley Museum (in the same section with "The Spouter"), are nearly wholly new on this side of the Atlantic. Similar weighty additions will be found to the Letters, which, chronologically arranged, exhibit for the first time completely the lights and shadows of their Writer's life and life-work. The Memorial-Introduction and Essay speak for

themselves ; so too, the greatly enlarged Glossary and the Notes and Illustrations. The Portrait is true, not idealised, from the original of CRAW. The Illustrations of (*a*) The School-house ; (*b*) The Swedish Church and Churchyard, showing the Grave-stone ; (*c*) The *fac-simile* of Handwriting, earlier and later, must prove acceptable.

The Essays from the "Ornithology" given in our collection, have been selected for their literary rather than their scientific merit. For the scientific, the "Ornithology" itself must be consulted ; but it seemed expedient to include in the Prose specimens of the *literature* of the great work. As I write these words, there reaches me, from America, a fly-leaf Note by WILSON on a fragment or proof-sheet (apparently) of one of the volumes of his "Ornithology." As it has never been published, and as it confirms the tradition of his nicety and carefulness of observation, it must follow here :—

"On the morning of the 28th of March [1808], I took from the leaves of a lemon tree in Mr. Bartram's garden a species of *Acaris*, vulgarly called Long Legs, Grandady, &c., &c., the body of which is nearly globular, and the legs, eight in number, from  $1\frac{1}{4}$  to 3 inches in length,—each having two joints near its middle part(?)  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch apart. Their legs, after being torn from the body of the insect and laid upon paper in a room, were agitated by sudden and violent motions, which often raised them from the paper, and they continued in that jerking or palpitating state for upwards of thirty minutes,—the motion at first being almost incessant in each, but gradually diminishing, or rather the intervals between each convulsive agitation increasing from a quarter of a second to a minute or two ; and even after some of them seemed entirely dead, on being touched a little with the finger, they seemed to revive, and started about as violent as ever. These

convulsive motions, if they may be so called, seemed to originate in the joints ; and what is very singular, each leg, before its final cessation, seemed to suffer expiring agonies,—starting about more violent than ever for a second or so, after which, no attempts with the finger could restore it. To some of these legs, a small fragment of the body adhered ; others had snapt short. The latter seemed to outlive the former, contrary to what might have been expected. Whether this extraordinary phenomena was occasioned by galvanism, electricity, or were thé mere convulsive vibration of the nerves, must be left to the practical Entomologist to discover and determine. The same experiments I have tried twice before with this insect with the like effects. Mr. William Bartram and his niece, Miss Ann Bartram, witnessed the singular exhibition.

“ Aug. 28th, 1808.

“ A. WILSON.”

Along with the preceding, there came copies of poems by WILSON from American newspapers. They are—(1). “ My Landlady’s Nose,” a Song,—Tune, “ The Bonnie Muir Hen ;” (2). “ The Dominie ;” (3). “ Prayer addressed to Jove, the God of Thunder, during the late Hot Weather,”—only the last offering anything noticeable as compared with our texts. After line 35, “ Sweep, &c.,” there comes this hitherto suppressed couplet :—

“ Blest by Thee—Thee our bounteous Parent,  
Curs’d, laid waste by Pitt the Tyrant,”

in the “ *Centinel*, Sep. 22, 1801.” In the “ *Centinel* of Aug. 24, 1801,” in which “ My Landlady’s Nose ” appeared, there is the following advertisement :—“ If the Person who found a Pocket-Book which was dropped, last Saturday week, somewhere on the road from Newark to Orange Dale and Bloomfield, and in which,

among other papers, was a Manuscript Copy of the above, will return it to Mr. Gardner, Hairdresser, in Newark, shall be thankfully rewarded.—A. W—N.”

I have very cordially to thank various correspondents in Paisley and Renfrewshire for willing help rendered. I must name EX-PROVOST BROWN and P. C. MACGREGOR, Esq., for loan of “The Spouter” and the original edition of the “Ornithology,” and Mr. THOMAS CRICHTON and Mr. ALLAN PARK PATON, Greenock, and Mr. D. SEMPLE, F.S.A., for the use of Letters and other rarities. I have also very specially to acknowledge earnest and eager research on the part of a “Brither Scot” in America,—Mr. JAMES GRANT of Philadelphia,—to whose enthusiasm I am mainly indebted for the new American materials.

I indulge the hope that this complete and trustworthy collection of the Poetry and Miscellaneous Prose of WILSON will be welcome. Anything worth doing at all, however humble, ought to be done well; and I have striven to do this as well as possible. For a critical estimate of ALEXANDER WILSON, the Reader is referred to the Essay in Vol. II. And so I send out the Book.

ALEXANDER B. GROSART.

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#### POSTSCRIPT.

As I finished the preceding Preface, Scribner’s *Monthly* for the present month (March) arrived; and, glancing through it, I was arrested by an illustrated paper entitled

“WILSON, THE ORNITHOLOGIST;”

by an American writer named “DORSEY GARDNER.” It is well-meant; but its biographical details being slavishly taken from Ord’s Life, continue his blunders of all kinds, and reflect his

ignorant verdict on the Poems of WILSON. It is scarcely worth while exposing these mistakes and stupidities. It is more pleasant to quote (with intercalated corrections) Mr. Gardner's concluding estimate of WILSON'S great work,—the more so that recent American naturalists seem to be somewhat grudging in their recognition of what the Pioneer American "Ornithologist" did:—

"Thus closed a life," sums up Mr. Gardner, "and a work which, it is no exaggeration to say, are without a parallel. When WILSON'S deprivations are borne in mind,—that his early instruction was scant and contemptible [a mistake, as shown in our Memorial-Introduction],—that, as a boy, he was put at an uncongenial occupation, which formed his means of livelihood through nearly half his days,—that his was a life-long struggle with difficulties, which only the sheer indomitable resolution of a man never cheerful or sanguine enabled him to surmount [a second mistake,—he was pre-eminently 'sanguine,' although dashed with occasional despondency],—that he was thirty years of age when, in a strange land, he effected his own education by becoming the instructor of others,—that he was thirty-three when he began the study of Ornithology [a third mistake; from his boyhood, the 'birds' were his associates and delight] with scarcely any resources beyond his own powers of observation, and the practice of Drawing without any previously-suspected aptitude [a fourth mistake; seeing that in the Paisley Museum there are drawings by him before he left Scotland],—that he was forty years old before an opportunity disclosed itself for the commencement of his work; forty-two when he first accomplished publication [of his "Ornithology"]; and only forty-seven when his life was closed,—it must be admitted that few careers so brief have been equally productive. His labors were not merely in a field in which he had to open a new path, but where the steps that had

been taken were false and misleading, and in which there were but few travellers. His journeys, largely performed on foot, exceeded ten thousand miles [more probably 15,000]. His work was unappreciated by those to whom he had the clearest right to appeal, and patronage was withheld by almost every incumbent of exalted position [*sic*]. Nevertheless, though discouraged by neglect, and hampered not merely by poverty but by the necessity of succoring those in still deeper need than himself, he both laid the foundation for the study of Natural History on this continent and bequeathed to his successors the outlines for its subsequent development; and he described the habits of American birds with fidelity to truth, graphic vigor, and a poetical realization of the beauties of Nature. The contingencies under which he wrote, and his premature death, left his work fragmentary and disjointed to this extent—that, being compelled to publish as rapidly as he could procure materials, he was forced to picture his birds without regard to scientific classification, to put in juxtaposition the most dissimilar genera, and even to separate the male and female of the same species. But the re-arrangement which he would, if spared, himself have effected, has been made by his friend Ord, who published his materials in posthumous volumes, and by subsequent editions; and the work was made complete by the four supplementary volumes of Prince Charles Lucien Bonaparte, nephew of Napoleon. The casual imperfections in his great work—almost miraculously slight, if we consider the cause of them—in nowise lessen the example of heroic endurance bequeathed to us by ALEXANDER WILSON.”

Incidentally, Mr. Gardner throws light on that “Governor of New York,” of whom WILSON wrote,—he “turned over a few pages, looked at a picture or two, asked me my price, and, while in the act of closing the book, added—‘I would not give a hundred

dollars for all the birds you intend to describe, even had I them alive.'” He remarks—“WILSON’S biographers have exercised an unmerited forbearance in suppressing the name of this enlightened ruler, who was DANIEL D. TOMPKINS.” I confess I have a (wicked) pleasure in contributing to the dishonour of this sapient Tompkins.

The illustrations of Mr. Gardner’s paper are—(1) A portrait,—after a wretched daub early engraved in America, and self-condemned; (2) Bartram’s House in Botanic Gardens, near Philadelphia,—a charming *bit*; (3) WILSON’S School-House at Kingsessing,—similar to our own; (4) “Gloria Dei,” Old Swedish Church, Philadelphia,—WILSON’S Burial-Place,—so taken as to hide WILSON’S Tombstone.

A. B. G.





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## Memorial-Introduction.

---

I cannot better begin to tell the story—a pathetic and beautiful, a noble and rebuking one—of the life of

Alexander Wilson

than by recalling a noticeable fact concerning him, viz., that exclusive of shorter notices in the usual biographical dictionaries and encyclopædias, and the scientific journals of Great Britain and America, France and Germany, there have been no fewer than Seven more or less considerable Lives of him by men of some mark—certain of them among the foremost—from good old THOMAS CRICHTON of his native Paisley, to GEORGE ORD of Philadelphia, and the American Biographies of JARED SPARKS of Boston, Massachussets, and later, from SIR WILLIAM JARDINE, in association with the Prince Charles Lucien Bonaparte, to the REV. DR. WILLIAM M. HETHERINGTON, and JULES MICHELET in “L’Oiseau,” and MRS. BRIGHTWELL’S charming “Difficulties Overcome: Scenes in the Life of Alexander Wilson,” 1861. I record them in the Preface; and of very few men can the same thing be told. Corresponding with this is the kindred fact that his memory is as green to-day in and around Paisley and across the Atlantic as ever: a statue in his “ain toon” and his grave in the “auld kirkyard” in Philadelphia, a pilgrim-spot for many year by year, bearing witness to this. More broadly, it is universally accepted that ALEXANDER WILSON must “for all time” hold his own in the illustrious roll of those who have in-

creased the FACTS and advanced our higher scientific observation and induction in the lines of the *Instauratio Magna*. These initial statements—not opinions, but certainties—may win interest in him and his Works from those to whom his name may be new, and help to convince that ours is no merely national or provincial admiration.

ALEXANDER WILSON was born in what is still known as the Seed-hills of Paisley, Renfrewshire, on the 6th of July, 1766. The house, which, until recent times, was proudly pointed out, stood within sound of the Falls of Cart, the now not very odorous or romantic river of the town, over and over celebrated in his Poems and Letters. His father mellowed into a fine example of the older race of stalwart Scotchmen, living until well on to ninety years. But in earlier days he seems to have been mixed up with semi-smuggling through secret distillation by the “wee still,” as a kind of hazardous supplement to his ordinary occupation of a weaver. A shadow of obscurity lies over the narratives, and there have been contradictions and re-assertions. I am afraid the balance of evidence is that old Wilson—then, of course, young—*did* intermeddle with illicit whiskey-making. That he speedily disentangled himself from it seems most probable; and that ultimately he stood high in the opinion of his fellow-townsmen as a man of integrity and large “common-sense” is unquestionable.\*

His mother was a MARY M'NAB, who had come to Paisley while a girl from her native place of the “Row,” in Dumbartonshire—in our generation made famous by one of Scotland's many

---

\* Cf. the *Paisley Magazine*, 1828, p. 582, (edited by Motherwell, who was careful and trustworthy), and the “Life and Writings of Alexander Wilson,” in the *Renfrewshire Magazine* for April, 1847, p. 283; also the Memoir in the Belfast edition of the “Poetical Works,” &c., (1845) pp. 326-28. Dr. Hetherington's testimony is explicit: “His father was a man of sober and industrious habits, of strict honesty, and superior intelligence; highly respected by all who knew him throughout a very long life,” (Memoir, p. xlii.) He died on the 5th of June, 1816, at the patriarchal age of eighty-eight years, having survived his son about three years. He came from Campbelltown, in Argyleshire, whither his grandfather had fled in the time of the persecution of the Covenanters, having been originally located near Lochwinnoch, in Renfrewshire.

ecclesiastical controversies, wherein the now venerable name of M<sup>r</sup> LEOD CAMPBELL was abused. All accounts agree that she was comely in person, pious after the ancient type of fervid godliness, and everyway, (in a good sense) a superior person. Unfortunately, hers was the disastrous beauty of consumption, and she died while Alexander was a very little lad, of only ten years, leaving her disconsolate husband with, at least, three children.\* The authenticated tradition is that his parents, especially his mother, intended that their "Alic" (Alexander)—according to the fine ambition of devout Scottish "common people,"—should "wag his head i' the puppit (pulpit) yet," that is, become a minister of the Gospel. This was remembered by WILSON in his "Solitary Tutor," as thus :—

" His parents saw with partial fond delight,  
 Unfolding genius crown their fostering care ;  
 And talked with tears, of that enrapturing sight,  
 When, clad in sable gown, with solemn air—

The walls of God's own House should echo back his prayer."

His school was the Grammar School of Paisley ; but from after-data it is clear that his attendance must have been limited and interrupted, and the whole result imperfect. He came to write an 'excellent hand,' and, as a whole, his English style is simple, natural, and idiomatic, but there are traces to the last of defective grounding in Grammar, Orthography, &c., &c. His indomitable perseverance subsequently enabled him to master very many things, that, under greater advantages, he might have started with ; but seeing that even so late as in America he is found striving to recover ground in Arithmetic and the like, our conclusion is warranted. I have used the word 'interrupted' because, like his gentle young contemporary, MICHAEL BRUCE, of Kinneswood, the "Sweet-singer" of the "Ode to the Cuckoo," and of the well-known Paraphrase—"Where high the heavenly temple stands," and others of equal worth—he was early sent to be a "herd" at a farm called Bakerfield, not very far from Paisley. There have been mythical-accretions to this period of his life which the

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\* All the Lives from Crichton, (Senex) onward.



wording employed falsifies, but that he *was* the “herd callan” on the farm of Bakerfield (not Threepwood) has been verified. I can accredit the legend that “he was a very careless herd, letting the kye transgress on the corn, *being very often busied with some book.*”<sup>\*</sup> Probably his herd experiences were short; in all likelihood during a single summer only. For in 1779 he was ‘bound apprentice,’ as a Weaver, being then in his thirteenth year. The original Indenture has been preserved, and claims a place here—the WILLIAM DUNCAN of the document being his brother-in-law, through marrying his eldest sister.

*Copy of Indenture between William Duncan and Alexander Wilson † :—*

It is Contracted, Agreed, and finally Ended betwixt the partys following, vizt. :—William Duncan, weaver in Seedhills of Paisley, on the one part, and Alexander Wilson, son of Alexr. Wilson, weaver in Seedhills of Paisley, on the other part, in manner following,—That is to say, the said Alexr. Wilson, junr, with the special advice and consent of his said father, hereby Becomes Bound apprentice and servant to the said William Duncan in his art and calling as a weaver, and that for the space of three years compleat from his Entry thereto, which is hereby Declared to commence at the date hereof, during which space the said apprentice as principal, and the said Alexr. Wilson, his said father, as Cautioner with and for him, Bind and

<sup>\*</sup> *The Paisley Magazine*, as before, pp. 582-3, compared with *The Renfrewshire Magazine*, as before, p. 284. As the elder Wilson did not go to reside at Auchinbathie until after his son's apprenticeship—an entry of baptism of a son by his second wife, bearing date 10th July, 1785,—it is evident that the writer in *The Paisley Magazine* has been misinformed on places and dates; but the critic in the *Belfast Edition* is unwarrantably severe, *e. g.*, granting that the verses assigned to the ‘herd’ Wilson really belonged to Alexander Tait, still they might well enough have been obtained by the ‘herd,’ circulated, as such things often were, in cheap form or in manuscript. Intrinsicly the verses are not worth contending over, and certes not at all above Alexander Tait, as *The Renfrewshire Magazine* insinuates—for his queer little volume of 1790 is not without a rough-ready wit, and an odd out-bashing of real poetic gift.

† From the original MS. in the Paisley Museum.



oblige them jointly and severally that he the said Alexr. Wilson, junr., shall faithfully and honestly serve and abide with his said master in his said trade, and shall not absent or desert his said service without leave asked and given, otherwise he shall pay half a merk Scots for each day he so absents or deserts his said service, or serve two days for one in the master's option, and which absent days shall be ascertained by the master's honest word or oath if required, or signed accot., in case of death, and that instead of all other proof; and that he shall duly attend his said service, and obey his said master, in all Lawfull commands, and do everything in his power for his said master's Interest and Benefite; For which causes, and on the other part, the said William Duncan, master, as principal, and John Finlayson, weaver in Seedhills of Paisley, as Cautioner with and for him, Bind and oblige them jointly and severally That he the said William Duncan shall faithfully Teach and instruct his said apprentice in his said trade of a weaver, and shall do everything in his power to make him skilled and qualified therein, so far as his own Judgement and the apprentice's capacity will admit of, and for that end shall keep the apprentice at daily work and furnish him with all necessary Instruments of trade used and wont, and shall further furnish and entertain the said apprentice in Bed, Board, Washing, and Cloathing, suitable to his station, during the space of this Indenture; and Lastly, Both Partys Bind and oblige them to perform their respective parts of the premises under the penalty of five pounds sterg., to be paid by the party failzeing to the other party attour performance. Consenting to the Registration hereof in the Books of Council and Session, or any other Judges' Books Competent, That Letters of horning on six days Charge, and all other execution necessary, may pass herein and Constitute.

"In witness whereof we subscribe these presents wrote upon Stamped Paper by James Gibson, writer in Paisley, at Paisley, the thirty-first day of July, seventeen hundred and seventy-nine years.

"Before these Witnesses the said James Gibson and Alex. Wier, merchant in Paisley.

"ALEX. WIER, *Witness.*

"JAMES GIBSON, *Witness.*

"WILLIAM DUNCAN.

"ALEXANDER WILSON, Junior.

"ALEXR. WILSON.

"JOHN FINLAYSON."

On the *verso* of this Indenture WILSON has written under date, August, 1782, this rhyme-record :—

“ Be’t kent to a’ the warld in rhyme,  
That wi’ right meikle wark and toil,  
For three lang years *I’ve ser’t my time,*  
Whiles feasted wi’ the hazel oil.”

“To a’ the warld” was addressed, it is to be feared, to a very small ‘world’ audience in so far as interest in the writer then went. But “I’ve ser’t my time,”—served-out my three years of apprenticeship, is evidently promulgated with a sense of relief. “Whiles feasted wi’ the hazel oil” or the birch-rod, is declarative of needed and enforced discipline while in the house of his brother-in-law. *En passant* it may be worth while remarking that his father having been compelled by the necessity of his circumstances to seek for feminine superintendence of his household, very soon re-married one Catherine Brown, a widow, with a family of her own ; and, inasmuch as it has been represented that his step-mother was unkind to him, and ‘drove’ him from his father’s house, be it noted that by the necessities of the Indenture young Wilson had to reside and be ‘boarded’ with his master, and that in his Letters he has nothing but gratitude and kindly remembrances to his second-mother, addressing both as “My dear father and mother.” \*

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\* GEORGE ORD is to blame as the originator of the misrepresentation of Wilson’s step-mother, and it is not to be wondered at that Dr. Hetherington writes very earnestly in refutation,—*e. g.*, “The American biographer states, that the unkind usage of Wilson’s step-mother drove him to forsake his paternal roof, and to seek an asylum in that of his brother-in-law, William Duncan. This is altogether incorrect. Those who had the means of knowing the truth, agree that she always treated him with kindness and attention ; and Wilson himself uniformly spoke of her with respect and gratitude. That he did reside in the house of William Duncan is true ; but it was during the term of his apprenticeship ; when, if not a matter of absolute necessity, it was at least one of mutual convenience. The wandering habits of his earlier years have also been attributed to the harsh treatment experienced at home ; but while these may be sufficiently accounted for otherwise,—as will appear in the course of our narrative,—it is due to the memory of a deserving woman to rescue her from so groundless an imputation.” (P. xv., as before.) See his Letters also, p. 170.

Throughout life the Loom was a bondage to WILSON. He pined for "Gleniffer Braes" and the 'greenwood,' for 'daundering' by the Cart, the Calder, and the Garpel and the Kame 'burn' sides, and listening to the singing of birds; and inheriting from his dead mother a naturally feeble constitution, the stoop over 'the wabs' must have been trying physically, and otherwise irksome. So that it is not at all to be wondered at that, having finished his apprenticeship in 1782, he continued a weaver 'by constraint, not willingly.' The Muses even thus early were tempting him, and in 1786 there came out that thin octavo which, for Scotland and Scottish Literature, holds the place of *the folio* of 1623 in all Literature—entitled, "Poems, chiefly in the Scottish Dialect. By ROBERT BURNS. Kilmarnock: Printed by John Wilson, MDCCLXXXVI." It was as vernal-warmth and inspiration to the pallid weaver-lad; for, like nearly all the weavers of Paisley, *Falstaff's* aspiration was his actual, and more:

"I wish I were a weaver, and I could sing psalms or anything,"  
(*King Henry IV.*, ii. 4.)

I do not doubt that with Kilmarnock so relatively near, ALEXANDER WILSON speedily found out the inspired "Ayrshire Ploughman;" and pleasant proof remains in our recovered poem by him, on seeing Burns's portrait in an American edition of the Poems. It is with the start and involuntary cry of a personal friend, recognizing one never-to-be-forgotten, that the little, humble but true tribute begins, *e. g.*:—

"Yes, it is he! the hapless, *well-known Burns,*  
*His look, his air, his very soul exprest;*  
That heaven-taught Bard, whom weeping Genius mourns,—  
For cold in earth his silent relics rest.  
*Through tears, that ease the anguish of my heart,*  
*I view the faithful image of my friend;*  
And vainly wish, dear Lawson, that thy art  
Could life once more to these lov'd features lend."†

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† See our section, "Poems hitherto uncollected, or for the first time printed:" Vol. II., pp. 358-59.

Touces recognisable here and there in his Poems shew that from 1782 onward, WILSON was accumulating the materials subsequently utilized in his volume of 1790 ; and we may thus indulge the "Pleasures of Imagination" over the meeting of the Ploughman and the Weaver ; the former in his 27th, the latter in his 21st year. Later, WILSON was to have the sweet gladness of hearing his anonymous "Watty and Meg" ascribed to Robert Burns, and Robert Burns owning that he should have been glad to have been its author ; and altogether it is a satisfying thing to know that two such men met, and that the greater and stronger had an elder brother's welcome for his visitor.\*

From 1782 to 1786 he continued working as a 'journeyman' weaver ; during which years he resided partly in Paisley, and partly in Lochwinnoch, and finally in Queensferry (the Queen being Mary Queen of Scots) near Edinburgh. In Paisley and Lochwinnoch he was under his father's roof ; in Queensferry with his brother-in-law and former 'master.' The "Groans from the Loom" and kindred verse-complaints touchingly reveal how extremely uncongenial was his avocation. His descriptive Poems similarly reveal that he was constantly escaping from the mephitic atmosphere of the weaving-room into the fields and hills. As elsewhere shown (in our Essay in Vol. II.), he was all unconsciously 'feeling after' that study that was to give him his world-renowned name of 'The Ornithologist ;' and it is as though a

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\* Dr. Hetherington, on the authority of P. A. Ramsay, of Paisley, thus writes of this :—"Shortly after the publication of Burns's poems, Wilson wrote to him ; objecting to certain of them, on account of their improper tendency. At this time the two poets were quite unacquainted. Burns returned an answer, that he was so much accustomed to communications of that description, that he paid no attention to them ; but that, as Wilson was evidently no ordinary man, and also a true poet, he would, in that instance, depart from the rule ; and he then entered into a vindication of himself and his poems. Shortly afterwards, Wilson went from Paisley to Ayrshire to visit Burns. On his return he described his interview with Burns in the most rapturous terms." "Cromek gives a different version of the incident, and attributes the termination of all intercourse between the two poets to Wilson's envy of Burns. This being shown to Wilson by one of his American friends, he rebutted the injurious imputation in the most decided terms." (Pp. xxv.-vi., as before.) Our recovered poem on Burns still more confirms Ramsay's account.

caged nightingale were given articulate speech to listen to the complaints and aspirations of this finely strung nature. To many, "weaving," with its splendid wages (then), was everything; to one like ALEXANDER WILSON, it was thralldom and meanness; for month by month he was indulging his bookish likings, and the hard realism of his every-day life could not but be sharp-edged against his imaginative ideal—as he read and pondered his Shakespeare and Burns, Pope and Goldsmith, Robert Blair and Beattie, all the more that his name was appearing now and again in the Poets' Corner of local newspapers.\*

It has been mentioned that his brother-in-law, WILLIAM DUNCAN had removed from Paisley to Queensferry, and that WILSON followed him thither. By-and-bye, Duncan resolved to 'travel' through the eastern districts of Scotland as a Pedlar; and having invited his brother-in-law to accompany him, he abandoned the loom, and gladly, and full of radiant hope, went forth in his new, untried capacity. WORDSWORTH has been ridiculed for making the central figure of the immortal "Excursion" a Pedlar—loud laughter, indeed, extinguished the original title of 'The Pedlar' †—but he knew what he was about. For multiplied are the proofs that, with the invariable exceptions of never-do-wells that will force themselves into every employment—the class of pedlars, or packmen, were peculiarly remarkable for brains and business capacity, and in Scotland and the border-counties of Cumberland, Westmoreland, and Lancashire, notable for their

\* The biographers (Ord, &c.) have stated that WILSON contributed Prose and Verse to the *Glasgow Magazine*. By the kindness of A. B. M'Gregor, Esq., of Glasgow, I have had the satisfaction of reading Vol. I. of the *Glasgow Magazine*.—"Printed by Ebenezer Millar, 1795," pp. 287—and this is all that ever was published; and no *Glasgow Magazine* preceded it. It was edited by William Marshall, Esq., writer, Glasgow: he died about 1810. At the date Wilson was in America. The only noticeable things in this now excessively scarce book are Burns', "A man's a man for a' that" (anonymously) p. 115, and "O wat ye wha's in yon town," headed "By Robert Burns, (never before published)," p. 155. The latter is interesting, as in the magazine it celebrates the Poet's own "bonnie Jean," while in the current text it has been transferred to another.

† See my edition of the Prose Works of Wordsworth, 3 Vols., Vvo.

shrewd common-sense, and abundant resources of mother-wit. Suffice it to name the 'pedlar,' biographers of Donald Cargill, and Peden, and the rest—Peter Walker, and 'Sandy' Laing, earlier, editor of the *Eccentric Magazine*, and the later Alexander Laing of Brechin, known as one of the sweetest as well as the raciest of minor Scottish minstrels, and John Magee, author of *Travels in North and South*; and that large class of stable capitalists, who, from generation to generation until now, have borne the name of Scotch Drapers, and than whom to-day, I know not of a more sterling race of hard-working men. Nor is this other than we might well anticipate; for from WILSON'S period onward, while communication between the great commercial centres was slow and difficult, and these centres themselves diminutive compared with their present gigantic extent, the 'pedlar' or packman, or chapman—for they were sometimes designated by the one and sometimes by the other—were all-important to the inland districts. True, much of the clothing and other necessaries that the most of families require in country places were 'home' made. Still many things were needed which could only be had from a town if not brought to their doors. The Pedlar did bring them. Then the Press was not that mighty 'fourth estate' it boasts itself now; when *The Times* was an insignificant small folio for long, and high-priced, so that the Pedlar was welcome with his budget of news, national and family. Neither, once more, was the Post-office the Briareus-handed, Argus-eyed, almost ubiquitous agency it is in 1875; and thus the Pedlar was often called on to carry 'hidling' (furtively), all manner of verbal and written communications between sundered hearts. A very little reflection will make it plain that the Pedlar then occupied no ordinary vantage-ground.

There were several orders of Pedlars. The first was that of the 'horse' packmen, that is those who travelled the country with their 'packs' carried by a horse. These were the aristocracy of the class. The next was the 'foot' packmen, or those who bore their packs on their own shoulders. Both of these usually dealt in what was called 'saft ware;' in other words, in clothes, of various kinds. The dealers in 'hard ware' were the travelling jewellers—a sort of 'gentle' tribe, at least they pretended to be



so—and the dealers in cutlery. All carried their wares in a chest or box, larger or lesser, divided into a great many separate drawers. Besides these, there was a numerous and less respectable class of ‘wallet’ men. These traversed out-of-the-way places with a wallet slung over their shoulders, containing needles and pins and other trifles, and a stock of penny histories, ballads, &c. ; and a basket on their arm, filled with spoons, combs, tapes, ‘pirns,’ sleeve-buttons, and all manner of odds and ends. The last class were generally accounted interlopers, and often brought disgrace and a rough reception to the ‘respectables’ from their misconduct and thievish and drinking propensities.

Throughout, ALEXANDER WILSON belonged to the ‘foot’ Pedlars, and his “Journal, as a Pedlar,” of 1789-90 is a graphic contribution to an unwritten chapter of our national History ; while his poems of ‘The Pack,’ ‘Apollo and the Pedlar,’ ‘The Loss of the Pack,’ ‘Epistle to a Brother Pedlar,’ and the ‘Insulted Pedlar,’ and his earlier Letters, gave amusing insight into the lights and shadows, adventures and misadventures, joys and sorrows of this kind of life. The ‘Journal and Letters,’ too, show that wherever there was any famous historical castle, or other ruin, or birthplace of some eminent Worthy of the Past, or—characteristically—any scene of grandeur and beauty, ‘pedlar’ WILSON is found turning aside to them. That he combined the solicitation of subscriptions for an intended volume of Poems with his pedlary, in all likelihood ranged him with the ‘wallet’ class ; and perchance led to that occasional ‘insulting’ treatment which he met with. Be this as it may, he had too much native independence and unaccommodating spirit to fall in readily with the humiliations to which very often the professed Pedlar had to submit ; and it seems pretty clear that no more than at the Loom was WILSON as a Pedlar in a congenial occupation, save in so far as it bore him out into the freshening air.

That at this late day the Reader may get a realizing glimpse of ALEXANDER WILSON as he followed his employment as a Pedlar, it may be permitted me to give a sketch of the Packman of from seventy to a hundred years ago—drawn from authoritative sources and youthful reminiscences of those who had been ‘in the line’

of business, and with whom, long ago, it was my delight to talk and better talk.

Well—you may suppose that you have before you a stoutish-made, thick-set man of the middle size, and about middle age, or under. Looking at him (the Reader must try to actualize our Pedlar for himself) you take him to be a little bandy-legged. But it is not so—he only walks wide at the knee—a habit acquired from carrying a great weight on his back. His face is tanned and weather-beaten ; but scan it narrowly and you will perceive marks of sagacity and shrewdness, and a quiet ‘ pawkiness ’ that comes out or ‘ bides ’ in according to the folk who are ‘ dealin ’ ; for there is a flexibility of muscle in that face which tells you as plainly as b’s no a bull’s fit (as the old ‘ saw ’ has it) that it can assume the look of demure sanctity, solemnity, unction, or the broadest grins of unrestrained mirth and guffaw. His eye, observe, is bright, sharp, and penetrative, as his avocation requires ; for, need we say, he has to engage in argubarguin’ an’ wheedlin’ an’ fraizin’ with all sorts of characters. His dress is composed of a stout blue coat, rather broad (which is now called ‘ full buttoned,’ if we err not) in the skirts, but not long—in fine, a ‘ long short-coat, (using the word substantively, not adjectively). His breeches, or ‘ breeks,’ are of a drab corduroy, and scarcely reach above his haunches ; but this is amply compensated by the longitude of his swan-down waistcoat, which comes down nearly to his thighs. His sturdy limbs are encased in a pair of home-made stockings, over which he wears a pair of ‘ cootikens,’ which reach half-way up his legs. Such is our Pedlar or Packman—as a type of the whole. On his back is a great bale of goods, square, and neatly strapped in a pack-sheet, strapped and cross-strapped with leather belts and buckles ; and above this again, and firmly strapped down to the other, is a much smaller bale of goods, of a kind most in request ; and to this his ‘ elwan ’ is made fast. In his right hand is a strong walking-stick, with a sharp ‘ pike ’ inserted at the lower end ; and with this he not only supports himself in walking, but fends ‘ aff ’ the dogs ; for every dog, somehow or other, entertained a great antipathy to packmen, as WILSON himself has sung :



" It fires, it boils my vera blude,  
 And sweats me at ilk pore,  
 To think how aft I'm putten wud,  
 When drawing near a door ;  
 Out springs the mastiff through the mud,  
 Wi' fell Cerberean roar,  
 And growling, as he really would  
 Me instantly devour  
 Alive, that day."

With this staff, too, he can ease his shoulders, by sticking it in the ground behind him, steadying it with his hand, and then allowing his pack to rest on the top of it. In his fob—nae wee bits o' waistcoat-pouches then, no the size o' the mooth o' a cuttie-wran's nest—is a large, broad watch—nane o' yer egg-shell lukin' whigma-leeries, but a richt wally ane, that filled the luff (the palm) an' that could leuk i' the face o' auld carle Time and say, I'm watchin' ye—attached to which is a strong steel chain, and to that again are appended two or three brass seals, one or two small keys, a shell—a kind o' bonnie strippit buckie—and an old coin, all which hang, you are to observe, half way down to his knee, where they dangle from side to side, as he wends slowly "owre muir, an' dale, an' down." Thus equipped, you have a very plain man before you, in every respect, no pretence about anything ; but you must feel satisfied, Reader, that he is a man of some means and substance, and not at all one whom it would be safe to prat wi', or try conclusions with in any way, by a novice.

The Pedlar, then, is introduced ; and having thus, so to say, shaken hands with him, we must next try to get at the fabric of the inner man, and so must follow him in the exercise of his peripatetic avocation. Bearing in mind, accordingly, what-like our typical Pedlar was, especially the capabilities of his facial muscles, and also what was said as to the changes in his manner of speaking according to those he chanced to be dealing with, or rather they with him, whether selling out of the pack, or whilly-wain a nicht's shelter and a cog o' brose, an' something till't, or tellin' a story or singin' a sang.

Bearing these distinctive characteristics of the order in mind,

let us suppose our Pedlar to approach the house of a well-to-do farmer or laird, who is rather seriously inclined [mark that !] He has, then, reached, let it be imagined, in the course of his peregrinations, the “toon” (farmhouse) o’ (it may be named) Powdrakes. He has some difficulty, owing to the size of his pack—and that he is proud of—in entering the door. But no sooner does he reach the “hallan” than he salutes the inmates in a drawling tone, with “Peace be to this house, an’ hoo’s a’ the gudefolks o’ Powdrakes the day ?” There is heard in answer, “Hech, sirs ! sic a stranger ! is that really you, Saunders ? Hoo hae ye (pronounced ‘ee) been, man, this lang time ? We thoocht we had lost ye a’thegither.” “I thank ye, mistress,” answers our friend, “thank ye for speering sae kindly efter my weelfare. I hae jist been daikerin’ on, fechtin’ awa’, as usual, wi’ a hard, wearifu’ sinfu’ warl’, and my ain eevil heart, daidlin’ frae door to door, an’ daein’ a’ I can to gar the twa en’s meet at the tail o’ the year, whilk, blessed be His name (taking off his bonnet) I hae aye bien enabled to do yet, tho’ I canna lang.” “Whan was ye at Glasco’ Saunders ?” inquires the gudeman, “They tell, man, that the French is coming owre to herry us out, stick and stow. What says the Glasco’ bodies to that ? an’ what ither news hae you in your travels ?” “Troth, gudeman,” returns our Pedlar (and let its policy be noted), “this is only my first out set sin’ I was at Glasco’ for I ken ye like to see what’s in my pack afore its shown to a’ the warl’ ; but as I was gaun to say, I wis at Glasco’ last ouk (week), and there’s naething but wars and rumours o’ wars there, jist as the Haly Beuk o’ God fortells. The hale toon’s in arms ; naething but trumpetin’ an’ drummin’ frae mornin’ till nicht.” (Your mull, Saunders ; and Saunders duly hands his ewe-horn ‘mull,’ or snuff-box, to the laird, who, evidently deeply interested, takes an enormous pinch of his favourite snuff.) “Aweel, Sir, jist as I was saying ; at the verra time I was in Tweedledum and M’Twister’s warehouse—ye ken I aye got my gudes frae the best house in a’ Glasco’—in caun twa o’ their warehouse bit cullans, in their regimentals : aff gaed the red coat an’ on went the black, doun gaed the gun an’ up gaed the elwan ; and yet they tell me a’ this sodgerin’ is no enough—the hale kint<sup>we</sup> maun rise in a march (*en masse*) they say.”

“Awfu’ times, awfu’ times. The Lord’s han’s heavy upo’ the nation, Saunders,” interrupted the gudeman. And Saunders allows himself to be interrupted, dexterously shifting ground. “I hard (heard) tae afore I got this length, Sir, that the Reverent Maister Pechangrane, o’ Monthoolie, has gotten a ca’ (tho’ some folk winna alloo’t to be sae named, but only a preesentation) to the parish o’ Cock-a-lorum, whare I’m jalousin’ the steepend ’l no be laigher” [It must be supposed that the Laird of Powdrakes was a Seceder, either with the Erskine folk or Gillespie]. “An’, Sir, as I cam alang yestern’s mornin’ somebody or ither tauld me—oo aye—it was the Laird o’ Hasleysshaw’s auldest son—gude friens to me Powdrakes, as I sall fin’ in the hame-gain”——(another ‘pawkie’ observation; for, notice, the Laird is an elder in the same Kirk wi’ the gudeman o’ Powdrakes, an’ if *he* bocht frae Saunders, it would not do to sen’ him empty-handed frae Powdrakes, nor to put it in his power to tell sic a thing: all of which our gleg-eyed little adventurer knows full well)——“tauld me, Sir, that the marriage atween Rab Roughead o’ Windy Was’, and Kate Scoure-the-Bent o’ Blackdubs, is broken aff. But they may mak’ it up again, for things o’ this sort, ye ken, are sune broken an’ sin hail.” “But I’m forgettin’ mysel’——(now comes business)——“I maun let you see something you hinna seen the like o’ this ae twalmonth, I’m thinking, ony way.” “Ye needna open out your *muckle* pack, Peter, at onyrate,” somewhat gruffly, says the maister o’ the house; for he is touched somehow in the matter of Rab Roughead, if we might tarry to inquire: “Ye needna open out the muckle ane, for I dinna think we stand in need o’ onything frae *it* the day.” “Hoot, gudeman,” quite unabashed, responds Saunders, “say ye’re no sure, an’ that’s a safe way o’ speakin’; wait till ye see. I ken your black coat is a thocht skuff’d, an’ ye’ll hae to be afore your betters, ye ken, ere it be lang, if a’ haud richt (glancing at the mistress) an’ the canny oor (hour) to her!—(a baptism in the distance). Sae when I was in the warehouse, I laid my han’s on a bit black claiith—it was a’ that was left o’ the wab—the Provost’s wab as they ca’d it, for he took a hale suit aff the fore en’ o’t by way o’ hansel, I was tauld: sac, says I to mysel’, ye maun gang wi’ me, ony way; ye’re

the verra thing for a gude frien' o' mine." Then—having all this time been unstrapping—"There leuk at that ; saw ye o'er a bit claith wi' a nap on't to be compar'd wi' that ? an' sic a body o' claith tae, as saft an' sappy as a soo's (sow's) lug ; nane o' your shilpit worm wabs that ye could blaw owre the riggin' wi' the win' o' your host (cough) ; the verra banes o't will wear agen twa new coats o' some claith. Come noo, treat yoursel' wi' a coat aff the Provost's wab—only haud it up atweef you an' the licht ; the best Saxon Wast o' Englan', dyed i' the woo', an' made o' the verra best o' stuff. Come noo, seven quarters braid, twa ells an' three nails o't, will mak' ye baith a coat an' waistcoat, an' a pair o' cootikens forbye—that's to say, if ye get an honest tailor ; but, wae's me, whare are ye to get an honest tailor ? What say ye till't, Laird ?"

"I'm no wantin' it ava, man, Saunders," replies the worthy farmer, "I dinna want it ; bit the claith's weel eneuch o' its kind ; a thocht tae my thinkin' slim i' the grip. Forbye, if I wanted a coat at a', I wad raiter hae a' bue (blue) ane. What price may ye be putten on the like o' that, na ?" Before answering the question, Saunders goes on to say—"Noo, gudeman, ye ken weel a black coat is an article o' dress that nae Christian man sud want—ye can gang to kirk or market wi't, bridal or burial. Only haud it up to the licht, an' look at the colour, as black an' glossy as the wing o' a crow. The minister himsel, honest man, ne'er had the like o't on his back. Ye'll (ee'l) no grudge me five-an'-twenty shillin's for the ell o't, an' ye'se get the odd nail to the bargain." . . . .  
 "Aughteen shillin's ! aughteen shillin's, the deil that I sud ban—the Gude forgie me for doin' sae—aughteen shillin's ne'er bocht the stuff it's made o' ; but as I hae said mony a time ahint your back, ye're a lucky man to trade wi', sae I reckon I manna let ye hae't at twa-an'-twenty an' saxpence, but oot o' that I winna mak it a hair o' my baird tae the faither that begat me." [He was long dead, but it was Saunders' phrase.] "Twenty ? Muckle obleeged to ye ; na, na, [folding up the cloth slowly.] I see we canna deal the day ; but if ee winna, anither wull. There noo, mak it anither shillin' an' a groat, an' ye'll get it, for, as I said afore, I aye like ee to hansell my pack. Weel—weel, there it is, keep aff the groat. But I'll sunc be a puir man, if I gang on at this rate."

To the mistress : " Afore I put up my pack, I maun let ee see a thing ye haena seen the peer o' ; it's a sort trysted, tho' (note the policy, again) by ane ee may hae heard o'. There's a shawl, mem, hasna the match o't in this pairt o' the parish ony way ; liker a blanket than a shawl for size—made o' the very best cassimer woo'—a new pattern that only cam' oot the ither day. Na, mem, that's no the way it's worn. Alloo me. There noo, only turn roun' an' leuk yersel i' the glass. Dis it no suit her weel, na, gudeman ? (Half aside : ' What need I say that—a weel-faur'd face sets onything weel. ') Ye ken, mem, I'm no tell-tale ; but ye can say, if ye like, that it's for the lady o' Gowanylees ; bit whae'er gets it, it will cost them twa-three pund notes an' a shillin' ony way ; but I canna pairt wi't on my terms, as I need never enter the door o' Gowan—confound my lang tongue ! Did ye look at the fringes, mem, they're made o' the best silk." . . . " Na, I canna tak that for't ; I ken whare I'll get mair. Some folk will be richt vaunty wi' this about their shouthers at the kirk neist Sunday ; an' sae they may, for siller canna aye buy the like o't." . . . " Oh dear ! but ye're sair on me the day ; ye ken I'm a puir simple body, an' stan' in yer skaith for mony meltiths o' meat, an' mony a nicht's lodgin' ; sae if I gie ye't for twa punds an' twa shillins, ye maun promise me ye'll no say hoo ye cam by't, or nae mair need I darken the door o' Gowanylees."

And so the bargain is concluded. Two sales, and a denty soom' i' the purse, no muckle less than gude aughteen shillin's an' a groat o' profit ; and so Saunders trudges on in his rounds.

But we cannot leave him yet. We have only seen one side, so to speak. Before we part, let us next suppose Saunders to enter a house where the family is partly grown up, and where there is perhaps less restraint than at Powdrakes. The usual salutations over, and the news discussed, one of the ' dochters' (Jenny, woman-grown) accosts him wiith—" But, Saunders, whare's the ribbon ye promised to bring me frae Glasco' ? I see you men's a' alike—fair promisers, but ill performers." " Ribbon ! ye daft tawpie, I've brocht ee something worth twa ribbons, for (in yer lug) I gat a kiss to carry ee frae ane ye ken o', an' I'm thinkin' ye'll fin' it hasna lost in my keepin' ony way. Sae at ye." . . .

Off goes Jenny, butt atween the doors, and Saunders straddling after her is followed by all the youngsters screaming with delight. It's a part o' Jenny's plan to allow herself to be overtaken; and Saunders no sooner lays hands upon her than she screams out, "Stop Saund-e-e-rs, ye auld sorra, stop, Saunders, oh, Saunders, oh." During the struggle, Saunders finds the means of pushing into her hands a letter unperceived by the bairns; and then declares "if she hasna gotten a' the kiss, the faut's nane o' his." She follows him ben scolding him as she can, for her capping-comb is between her teeth, and she is twisting and putting up her wealth of yellow hair, while her face, as Saunders himself would say, is as "red as a nor'-wast munc." The mother now attacks him with "Fye, Saunders, fye—you an elderly man, an' a married man atour, rinnin' amang the lasses at this gate." Saunders meets her as usual with an old proverb—"Oo ay, kissin's cried doon sin' the shakin' o' hans'," and then strikes up—

"When I was a young man in my prime,  
To kiss the lassocks I thocht nae crime."

"but a' that's awa frae me noo. As for Jenny an' me, it's no for naething the gled whistles (another old proverb hinting at the letter he had duly delivered during the 'touzle' frae *somebody*; and which all the while the gudewife jaloused.)

"Naething needed my way, the day, bodies?" . . . "No; weel nae ill dume, anither day will do as weel. But I'm gaun to sort up my pack a wee thing; sae, ee can tak a leuk: it will cost ye naething. (Again policy.) . . . "Buy a waistcoat piece, lad? There's a swandown for ilka-day wear; there's a Camperdown for jauntin' wi'; there's a mazziel for a kirk waistcoat. But whaur's my willigolcerie? Ay, come in owre, my bonny doo, an' buy a gownpiece. See there's a gingham, a brent new pattern, fast colours, 'll wash weel, the best o' Turkey red—fifteenpence to ither folk, but fourteen an' a bawbee to you." . . . "Gudewife, ye're daft the day, clean red-wud. Tenpence! Though the man that made it had baith stolen the yarn an' cheated the weaver, I couldna sell it at that price; but if ye're for a cheap article, I can fit ye, altho' I didna think ee war o' the kind that



cared for jist cheap things. See there's a gude print at tenpence, an' there's anither at the same; there's a genty thing at ninepence, an' there's anither no muckle waur at aught an' a bawbee." "That silk neepkin, Willie, cost seven an' saxpence in the shops, but I'se gie ee't for the sax an' sax; it's silk, real Ingy (Indian). I coft a dizen o' them frae a sailor lad on the spree—nae duty, ye ken!—that's the hinmost o' them, an' it'll no be lang wi' me, ony way." . . . "Thank ye, but I canna tak it." Then returning to the 'goon'—"Hoot, it comes nae to muckle siller a' thegither; fourteen an' a bawbee, did I say? Let me see, aught ells for the goon, and a quarter for mendin'." (Interrupted.) . . . "Weel man, weel, ye'se get it for the sax, but I'm muckle the waur o't." (Resuming.) "Whare was I at? Ay; aught ells is aught shillin's; an' aught tippences is saxteenpence; that mak's nine an' a groat; an' then there's—but I reckon I maun fling awa' the bawbees, an' maun gie owre-an'-abune twa-three hanks o' thread to mak it wi'; but then the quarter—say nine an' saxpence a' thegither. Whare's my elwan? (To little Willie—Thank ee, my braw fellow, ye'll be a man afore yer mither yet.) . . . "What! aucht will buy it in ony shop? I'll mak ye a present o't if ye get it for aucht an' twa, an' a shillin' to tell't wi'. Do I no gang to Glasco on my ain shanks-naig, an' wale my gudes wi' my ain hans, an' pay them on the nail? Hae I a heavy shop-rent an' hoose-rent abune my heid? Sae ye see I can undersell the best o' your shop folks; bit I'll mak it the nine, an' frae that I'll no steer or pit a sheer in't." . . . "Na, na, I canna, I really canna tak it." . . . "Weel, there it's tae ye, an' I wush (wish) ee weel tae weer't. Bit min', I maun get a new pair o' gloves at the waddin'" (marriage). . . . And thus Saunders, the Pedlar, pursued his way day by day.

These sketches in homely fashion—and not disdaining our Doric mother-tongue as required—may aid in vivifying the life of Alexander Wilson as a Pedlar, and add new meaning and colouring perchance to his 'Journals,' Letters, and related Poems. Retrospectively, one has a curious feeling in reading the rebuffs and menial supplicancy of the 'Journals,' in the knowledge that it was a very steed of the sun that was thus yoked to a dung-cart,

or, unfiguratively, a man of sensitive, strangely refined if also in elements as strangely coarsened temperament, who was thus trudging and drudging from door to door. For myself, I regret as much on the 'fair lady's' own account as Wilson's, that the Duchess of Buccleugh so frivolously dashed into greyest rain, not to say sleet, the rainbow of his hopes at the Fair of Dalkeith.\*

It has incidentally come out in our narrative that Wilson mingled the getting of subscribers for an intended volume of Poems with his 'pack' carrying. He arranged with a fast friend, John Neilson of Paisley, for the printing, and meanwhile carried a — prospectus. It will be found in the commencement of his "Journals"; and in the Journals and Letters, there are many amusing notices of his efforts in seeking to gain names for his book—as later there are equally grotesque accounts of the way in which actual subscribers sought to repudiate their former orders. The volume appeared in 1790. On its somewhat varied and unequal contents, I speak critically in our Essay on the Life and Writings. A second edition, with additions and excisions, made up of unsold copies of the first, followed in 1791. It was discussed in the weaving-shops and corners o' the streets of Renfrewshire, and in a humble kind of way the Author became known. The chief addition in 1791 was "The Laurel Disputed," which, as having been originally read in the Pantheon, Edinburgh, and published separately along with a very poor companion-poem by Picken, was in the mouths of the literary circles of Scotland. The crown of his work as a Poet, his inimitable "Watty and Meg," than which Ostade or Teniers has never painted low-life with more cunning hand, was still to come. It was published early in 1792 as a penny chap-book without his name, and, as already stated, was ascribed to Burns. He had given up his 'pack' and returned to Lochwinnoch and the Loom; and he is found now there and now in Paisley in a home called 'The Douket,' 'weaving' but chafing against the yoke. Never very strong physically, it would seem that he gave way to melancholy, even deep despondency. His earlier Letters are affecting. He was in sad poverty and hard-

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\* See the "Journals," Vol. I., p. 25.



ship, and deep melancholy brooded over him. He was 'ill at ease' in himself, and for his down-trodden fellow-countrymen. Yet he has flashes of dry humour and biting sarcasm. In his humour, he could even make a jest of his poverty. Thus among the Paisley Museum unpublished MSS., there is this mock-petition :—

"The humble petition of A. W. humbly sheweth that your petitioner is, and has been for some time past, grievously afflicted with a want of pecunia; the want of which has brought him to such low circumstances that no person ever experienced but himself. He therefore flatters himself that the charitable disposition which always shows itself in you, on like occasions, will also distinguish itself in the relief of your poor petitioner, and your petitioner shall ever pray.

"A. W."

The exercise of that gift of satire which belonged to him involved him in troubles that all unconsciously were to shape his appointed destiny. In "The Shark; or Lang Mills Detected," "The Hollander; or Light Weight," and "Hab's Door; or the Temple of Terror," there remain specimens of his drastic portraiture of local self-importances and petty tyrants, who locally wielded a "little brief authority" hardly and pitilessly. Technically, if not morally, these, and it is believed others, were adjudged libellous; and one result was that Wilson, who manfully avowed their authorship, was fined heavily, condemned to burn the poems at the Cross, and, being unable to pay, sent to jail. In those days when the political atmosphere was surcharged with electricity, and when to speak what are now truisms of civil and religious freedom was held to be treason against the monarchy; and treason to the people an impossibility, such biting sarcasms were perilous. From facts that result through researches into the character of the long-forgotten nobodies (or bodies only) concerned, I am not satisfied that one line of the poems was unwarranted. The one condemning thing is that, according to his accusers, Wilson in some pecuniary straits had offered to suppress the satires for a given (small) sum of money. That I, for one, discredit. His Letter from "Paisley Jail, 21st May, 1793" (Vol. I., pp. 58-9) gives not one tittle of support to the allegation; yet, is it to

his enduring honour that, when years after in America his brother brought over these poems as thinking it would please him, he threw them into the fire unread, saying that if he had followed his worthy father's counsels they never should have seen the light.\* Be it remembered, he was young and fervid; that the struggle then as since was an unequal one between capital and labour; that 'property' enforced its rights and eschewed its duties; and that cooler heads used the young Poet for their own ends. At the very same period, Robert Burns was 'suspect' from supposed Jacobinic sympathy with the French Revolution that was thundering over Europe, and which those who shouted 'God Save the King' imagined they silenced by stopping their own foolish ears. William Wordsworth was at work on his "Apology for the French Revolution: By a Republican,"—that grand Philippic which it has been my good hap to give to the world for the first time.

Wilson looked wistfully across the Atlantic. The sky of Britain was dark. The 'people' were in extremity of suffering. A vague terror was in the air. And so, giving reins to an always vivifying Imagination, he persuaded himself that in the young Republic he should find himself a freeman, and with new possibilities of winning his way. From an unpublished Manuscript of his life-long friend, the venerable Thomas Crichton, of Paisley, now before me, I gladly take an account of the sad yet hopeful away-going. It runs thus:—"Soon after uttering the mournful sentiments of this poem ["Tears of Great Britain"] our patriotic bard resolved to bid adieu to his native shores; and that evening, that beautiful summer evening when I last saw him, is still fresh in my recollection. At this time he was thoughtful and concerned, and as we stood by the banks of our favourite river, the Cart, our conversation was serious and interesting. His determination to leave his country was, however, fixed, and his views and anticipations of future prosperity were directed to the shores of Columbia, which

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\* M'Gavin too lightly accepts the current "evil reports." It were amusing, if it were not somewhat sad, to read the awe-struck horror and bated breath with which the Rev. J. B. Dickson, in his Life of Wilson, tells that "he had even assailed the highest person in the land." Why not, if he deserved it? and who will say the Georges did not?

he considered as the asylum of the unfortunate. While he felt the regret which every generous and affectionate heart must feel at parting with (a few) steady friends, he, with firm resolution, was determined to encounter all the inconvenience and dangers of a voyage across the Atlantic ; and, with little money in his pocket, he looked forward to more prosperous days on the banks of the Delaware. Yet with all his pleasing anticipations I can easily suppose that, when our interesting emigrant took the last look of the receding shores of his native Isle, he would feel disposed to address his beloved country in the language of another of Scotia's bards :—

' Farewell ! farewell ! dear Caledonia's strand :  
 Rough though thou be, thou'rt still my native Land.  
 Exil'd from thee, I seek a foreign shore,  
 Friends, kindred, country, to behold no more.  
 On thee, dear native Land, from whence I part,  
 Rest the best blessings of a broken heart ;  
 Go where I may, nor billows, rocks, nor wind,  
 Can add of honour to my tortur'd mind.' "

Perhaps "tortur'd mind" is too strong ; but emigration in 1793 was an awful thing to most, and the 'great sea' a mystic and mysterious world. His Letter from "Philadelphia, July 25th, 1794" (Vol. L, pp. 59-62)—a long and important one, addressed to his father and 'step' mother, reminds us of the proudly-prophetic words that the 'marvellous boy,' Chatterton, wrote down to his mother and sisters from London ; and yet, under all the vivacity, there is a distinct consciousness of the need of uttermost exertion and diligence even in the wonder-land of the new world. His Letters as now (for the first time) fully brought together and chronologically arranged tell his life-story unstudiedly and simply. His fertility of resource and readiness to turn his hand to anything that offered belongs to our more modern conception of the Yankee proper. From a chance-job in a copper-plate printer's office to a resumption of 'weaving,' and from a like resumption of the 'pack' to acting as Schoolmaster, he comes before us as a man of indomitable energy and high-purposed resolve. The last employment, curiously enough, seems to have been no ordinary success. He

must have communicated his own enthusiasm to parents and scholars alike; for he won golden opinions from all, and drew around him very considerable numbers for the period. His 'School' keeping was also touched with the romance of the "old old story" of love. Certain of his Letters indicate that in some way or other his affections had been won by a "fair lady," and that the course of their love did not "run smooth." Save in his rather *jejune* lines to "Lavinia"—recovered by us—there is nothing substantively indicative of the usual poetic ardours toward the softer sex. His Letters enable us to trace him through various of the States of the Union. *The* appointment that went most of all to determine his future was that of Teacher of a seminary in the township of Kingess, near Gray's Ferry, on the river Schuylkill, about four miles from Philadelphia. This brought him into friendly relations with men capable of appreciating him and of aiding him in his blind gropings after his predestined work. There was WILLIAM BARTRAM, the strong-headed, large-hearted, afar-seeing Botanist and Naturalist, whose gardens are sweetly and picturesquely sung of in "The Rural Walk"—another of our recovered poems, by Wilson. There was Lawson, the Engraver, who most willingly seconded his efforts at self-instruction in drawing from nature and etching. There were Libraries, too, whence books on natural history and travels and voyages were fetched. It is a life of a noble kind that is thus brought before us—protracted ardent application to the duties of the School, and at hard-won leisure hours in ardent pursuit of knowledge in the face of all difficulties. One Letter opens to us at last the secret of his destiny. It is a brief scrap to Crichton, and must be given (1st June, 1803). . . . "Close application to the duties of my profession, which I have followed since November, 1795, has deeply injured my constitution, the more so that my rambling disposition was the worst calculated of any one's in the world for the austere regularity of a teacher's life. I have had many pursuits since I left Scotland—Mathematics, the German Language, Music, Drawing, &c., and I AM NOW ABOUT TO MAKE A COLLECTION OF ALL OUR FINEST BIRDS."\* Elsewhere—in the Essay before named—I examine critically, and nevertheless sympathetically, his achieve-

ment as ‘*The Ornithologist*’ of America. Here it suffices to note that henceforward he devoted himself to his casually-announced collection of all America’s finest birds with a consecration of intellect and heart, scrutinizing observation and beautiful enthusiasm, that thrill one across the half-century and more. North and South, East and West, he journeyed—gun in hand—in forest, brushwood, reeded swamp, river, lake, mountain, everywhere, with a burning passion combined with a modest patience of research very wonderful. Volume I. of this imperishable work appeared in 1808. Volume II. followed in 1810. And so on to Volume VIII. in 1814, with the Editor’s sorrowful announcement of the death of “Mr. Wilson;” although it had been nearly all printed under his own eye, and announced to friends in Scotland as to be “published in November” (1813). Three months before that he was gone. He died on the 23rd of August, 1813, in the 48th year of his age. “The moment,” says his brother, who had a few years previously joined him in America, “that I heard of his sickness, I went to the city, and found him speechless: I caught his hand; he seemed to know me, and that was all. He died next morning at nine o’clock. † A friend thus told the immediate cause of the final illness: “While he was sitting in the house of one of his friends, enjoying the pleasures of conversation, he chanced to see a bird of a rare species, for one of which he had long been in search. With his usual enthusiasm he ran out, followed it, swam across a river, over which it had flown, fired at, killed, and obtained the object of his eager pursuit; but caught a cold, which, bringing on dysentery, ended in his death.” ‡ His remains were deposited in the burial-ground of the Swedish Church, in the district of Southwark, Philadelphia. While in good health he had, in a conversation on death, expressed a wish to be laid in some rural spot where the *birds might sing over his grave*. His characteristic wish was unknown at the time; but although the Swedish Church is in a business-crowded district, I myself, on paying a pilgrim-visit to the grave, heard an oriole piping softly and sweetly within a few yards of it. A plain marble table-monument bears the following inscription:—

\* Vol. I., p. 101.

† Hetherington, Ord, and all.

‡ Ibid.

THIS MONUMENT  
 COVERS THE REMAINS OF  
 ALEXANDER WILSON,  
 AUTHOR OF THE  
 "AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGY."  
 HE WAS BORN IN KENFREWESHIRE, SCOTLAND,  
 ON THE 6TH JULY, 1766 ;  
 EMIGRATED TO THE UNITED STATES  
 IN THE YEAR 1794 ;  
 AND DIED IN PHILADELPHIA,  
 OF THE DYSENTERY,  
 ON THE 23RD AUGUST, 1813,  
 AGED 47.

It is a pleasure to be able to give an engraving of this memorial and of the quaint old Church. Nor is it a less pleasure to reproduce, from a Philadelphia newspaper (of Feb. 28, 1846), a verse-rendering of his dying wish, which is not without true poetic touches:—

“ In some wild forest shade  
 Under some spreading oak or waving pine,  
 Or old elm festooned with the budding vine,  
 Let me be laid.

In this dim, lonely grot,  
 No foot intrusive will disturb my dust ;  
 But o'er me songs of the wild birds shall burst,  
 Cheering the spot.

Not amid charnel stones,  
 Or coffins, dark and thick with ancient mould,  
 With tattered pall, and fringe of cankered gold,  
 May rest my bones ;

But let the dewy rose,  
 The snowdrop and the violet, lend perfume  
 Above the spot where, in my grassy tomb  
 I take repose.

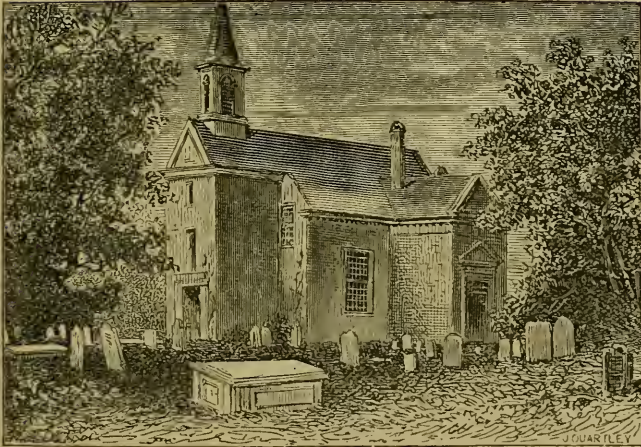


Year after year,  
 Within the silver birch tree o'er me hung,  
 The chirping wren shall rear her callow young,—  
 Shall build her dwelling near ;

And at the purple dawn of day,  
 The lark shall chant a pealing song above,  
 And the shrill quail shall pipe her song of love  
 When eve grows dim and gray.

The blackbird and the thrush,  
 The golden oriole, shall flit around,  
 And waken with a mellow gust of sound  
 The forest solemn hush.

Birds from the distant sea  
 Shall sometimes hither flock on snowy wings,  
 And soar above my dust in airy rings,  
 Singing a dirge to me.”



Such are the outward Facts of the Life of Wilson. They will enable the Reader to pass to his Letters and Home-and-American Journals with a more informed interest and sympathy. In Volume II. will be found a study of his Life and Writings and work done, looking more at the inward Facts. Perhaps whoso turns thither may not go wholly unrewarded. Meanwhile, I am proud of the opportunity given to add my stone to the 'cairn' of his bright and stainless, heroic and winsome memory. Scotland has produced not a few names that are written high up in the pillared temple of Fame; Wilsons are varied, as in the red story of the Persecution, gentle yet heroic MARGARET WILSON, 'drowned' on the level sea-sands, because she would not renounce her Lord and the truth as she understood it; and onward, cultured and Apollos-mouthed WILLIAM WILSON, of the great 'Secession' Church of Perth; and onward still, JOHN WILSON, our own 'Christopher North,' of many-sided genius; and the just-gone JOHN WILSON, of Bombay, a prince among missionary-scholars; and lovable PROFESSOR GEORGE WILSON, of the dainty fancy and mellifluous gift of speech and pen; and his antiquarian brother, PROFESSOR DANIEL WILSON of Canada: with, in more sequestered spheres, the WILSONS of Greenock, earlier and later, who sang of "The Clyde," and the "Pleasures of Piety;" and not forgetting GENERAL SIR ROBERT WILSON, one of Wellington's heroes. But take them all in all, perhaps none of them all has secured a more unique, as, certainly, none has a more enduring place in the grateful annals of the Old and the New Worlds.

. . . "Thus see we, in this native image-light,  
 No lack, where Art and Nature joynèd be;  
 Who, therefore, will in idleness delight,  
 And make not DOING his felicity? [*painstaking*]  
 As Earth by him turns wilderness again,  
 So Nature in him rusts for lack of pain.

Labour and care, then, must familiar be,  
 Thorough the vigor of men's education;  
 To give mankind, against necessity,



Protection in some honest occupation;  
 And all grow undertakers—not a drone :  
 Both ignorance and idleness unknown.” \*

ALEXANDER B. GROSART.

## ADDITIONS.

The three following Letters (not having been obtained until the others had been printed off) are added here,—all hitherto unpublished. Their headings point out their respective places :—

## \* LETTER VIII. a

Weather has hindered a visit, also sadness—“little Peggy’s misfortune”—a remedy  
 —Dr. Cleland—health—good wishes—from Williamsburgh, near Paisley.

*To his Father.*

Williamsburgh, Jan. 25, 1791.

DEAR FATHER,

I am very sorry that the uncommon coarseness of the weather, and a perplexity of affairs, has entirely prevented me from coming out to see you. I was determined, Sunday was a week, to have paid you a visit, but was taken badly, and scarcely able to move for four days, by running, one stormy night, from Paisley to Glasgow and home again, without intermission, on a particular affair. I was much concerned, on coming from the east country, to hear of little Peggy’s misfortune. I have spoken to several persons who have experienced the like disorder, and have been perfectly recovered by the simple means of a cold bath, rubbing, and exercise. I would sincerely advise you to disregard the foolish prescriptions that every old wife is ready enough, on occasions of this kind, to recommend. The simplest remedies are always the most successful, and, considering her age, I have great hope of her recovery. When in Paisley, I shall speak to

\* Works of Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke, by me. 4 vols. Vol. I., p. 135 (“Of Commerce”).

Dr. Cleland, with whom I am acquainted, and what in that case he prescribes or advises shall cost you nothing. I am happy to hear that you are both in health yourselves. When blest with this invaluable treasure every enjoyment has a sweeter relish, and the ills of life are more easily supported, but deprived of health, the greatest dainties disgust, and the slightest misfortunes sink us in despondency. As soon as the weather will permit, I hope to see you, but as I am not yet quite strong, I am unwilling to venture out amid such weather. However, I wish you the comfort of the season, a prosperous new year, and more happiness than at present seems to attend you. This is the sincere wish of

Your affectionate Son,

A. WILSON.

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\* LETTER XXXVIII. <sup>a</sup>

Attack of Bees—playful sympathy—gifts sent.

To WILLIAM BARTRAM.

Union School, 22nd May, 1804.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I truly sympathise, though not without a smile, at the undeserved treatment you have experienced from your colony. Recollection of the horrible fate of their fathers smothered with sulphur, or perhaps a presentiment of what awaits themselves, might have urged them to this outrage; but had they known you, my dear friend, as well as I do, they would have distilled their honey into your lips instead of poison, and circled around you, humming grateful acknowledgments to their benevolent benefactor who spreads such a luxuriance of blossoms for their benefit. Accept my thanks for the trouble I put you to yesterday.

Mrs. Leech requests me to send Miss Bartram two birds, and thinks they would look best drawn so that the pictures may hang their length horizontally.

I send a small scroll of drawing paper for Miss Nancy. She will oblige me by accepting it; and as soon as I get some letter paper worthy your acceptance, which will be to-morrow, I shall be happy of the opportunity of supplying you. There are some observations

in your last which I would remark on, but am hurried at the present moment.

Farewell.

Yours sincerely,

ALEX. WILSON.

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It is to be regretted that Ord mutilated the Letters of Wilson, and that, as a consequence, many have to be published imperfectly. By the kindness of Mr. James Grant, as before, I have received complete and faithful copies of three letters given by Ord; and it is thought worth while to fill in the blanks, &c. (1) Letter xlix.: April 18th, 1805. It commences "My Dear Sir," and ends "I am, with esteem, your ever affectionate Friend, ALEX. WILSON." In line 3, it is 'who,' not 'which' (a characteristic difference); and in line 7, after "heart," follows the further tribute to Bartram—"and the meekness of his many virtues, who, like his own humble rose-bushes, contents himself with the sheltered scene of rural retirement,—diffusing to his friends a pleasing serenity by the mildness of his manner." (2) Letter lvi.: January 27, 1806. It commences "My Dear Friend," and ends "Am, as ever, yours truly, ALEX. WILSON." In line 2, the blank is "Ronaldson, Typefounder;" and after "Ohio," comes "to St. Louis," and thereafter reads "where they purchased a quantity of lead, and returned by sea." In line 10, after "natural objects," there is added—"but the general scenery."

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\* LETTER LXXXVIII. <sup>a</sup>

Introduction to Orr of Major Carr—city and country.

To GEORGE ORD.

Bartram's Gardens, July 9th, 1811.

DEAR SIR,

My friend Major Carr, the bearer of this, is desirous of conversing with you on the subject of Hemp,—of which he has at present a large and very promising field; and I feel happy in

introducing him to your acquaintance, as I know you will be mutually pleased with each other. I hope you are preparing me some notes on the Purple Martin ; if not, I shall be sadly disappointed. My 4th Vol. is printed ; but the engraver has not yet finished with the two last plates. I am arranging things better for the 5th, which I hope to be able to publish in four months after the present.

Knowing the charms that the City presents at this season, it would be a mere waste of words to invite you to the Country, particularly to such a place as this, and to such a person ; but Heaven bless you. So prays yours, ALEX. WILSON.

POSTSCRIPT.—Having just received from the United States, copy of a Letter written by Dr. John W. Francis of Newport, Rhode Island,—which appeared in the *New York Mirror* of February 21st, 1835, containing personal reminiscences of Wilson,—I am glad that I am able to give it a place here. Somewhat old-fashioned in its style, as in its orthography, it is nevertheless too matterful to be neglected :—

“NEWPORT, September 8th, 1834.

“It was my happiness to be personally acquainted with Alexander Wilson. The first time I saw him was in the latter part of October, 1808. He had just completed his first volume of his ‘Ornithology,’ and had come to New York to solicit subscribers. The slender countenance he received to aid him in his vast undertaking, was somewhat depressing to his feelings. He stated briefly the great efforts he had made the better to justify his application for subscriptions. ‘I determined,’ said he, ‘to let the publick see a perfect specimen of my work before I sought their pecuniary support, and I carry my volume with me. I shall not abandon my design, however lukewarm it may be looked upon ; but cherish the hope that there is, in this widely extended and affluent country, a number of the admirers of Nature sufficient to sustain me in my enterprise. What pains me,’ he farther remarked, ‘is the indifference with which works in Natural History are often regarded by men of cultivated understanding and rank in life. I have just returned to your city

after a visit to Staten Island, to submit my volume to your governour. He turned over a few pages, looked at a picture or two, asked me my price, and, while in the act of closing the book, added—'I would not give a hundred dollars for all the birds you intend to describe, even had I them alive.' Occurrences such as these distress me ; but I shall not lack ardour in my efforts.'— This little incident, I confess to you, it was sufficiently mortifying to hear. Moreover, the governour of the State of New York is always presumed to be an enlightened character. By Charter, he is a member of the Board of Regents,—a body constitutionally created,—who direct and control the intellectual pursuits of an Empire State. Wilson, in his subsequent visits to New York, seemed to be in better spirits, both on account of the patronage he had received and the progress he had made in his work. He seized the moments of leisure he had in closely examining books in Natural Science in different libraries to which he could obtain a ready access. The American Museum, which had now been well fitted up, was, however, his most gratifying resort. Scudder, the founder of this institution, was indeed a rough diamond ; -but few could surpass his enthusiasm in studying the Volume of Nature, as he termed every subject in Natural History. Wilson was loud in his praises of the *preservative* talents of this artiste of materials in Natural Science ; but on that day, we had not the experience and results of Waterton before us. Few greetings could be more joyous than that of these men, great as was the disparity in their scientific knowledge and intellectual culture.

"Scudder remarked—'I have many curiosities here, Mr. Wilson, but I myself am the greatest one in the collection.' Scudder continued and stated the trials he had passed amid rocks and glens ; referred to the time when he carried his museum on his back ; and exulted at the success which thus far crowned him. He believed that a taste for Nature's works was more diffused. He said he had travelled thousands of miles in order to bring various objects of Natural Science together worthy of study. All this was listened to by Wilson with feelings of great gratification ; but when the Museum-man added—'Yet notwithstanding all, and my success so far, I still find that the Witch of Endor and Poti-

phar's Wife bring me ten dollars where my Natural History does one.' The Ornithological Biographer, filled with emotion and changing countenance, gave utterance to a vehement expression on the listlessness of man in contemplating the harmony of Nature; and while recounting his pedestrian excursions through our extensive country, gave vent in philippic against closet-naturalists and sedentary travellers. He seemed to have as great dislike to this last-named class of beings as ever our old friend, Dr. Williamson, cherished. It was during one of these, his later excursions to the city, that Wilson waited upon our mutual friend, Dr. Mitchill, whose fame had not extended far beyond the 'Grampian Hills' or the chalky cliff of Dover. Wilson found the doctor in his study. He had, about this time, commenced his investigations of the qualities and numbers of fishes in the waters of New York. Surrounded by his cabinets of conchology and mineralogy, and with his room still farther enriched with collections of Indian tomahawks and antiquities, and dresses of the inhabitants of the South Seas, the doctor poured out of the immense treasures of his prompt memory, and gave ingenious illustrations on divers topics for the mental gratification of Wilson. The meeting was highly satisfactory to both. The ornithologist found the amiable and benevolent philosopher the most accessible of mortals, expert in disquisition whatever the subject—a monad or the Niagara; and no less ready at the composition of songs for the nursery than in expounding his beautiful theory of the heavens. 'You have sojourned largely through our country, Mr. Wilson,' says Dr. Mitchill. 'I no longer travel, travellers come to me.' The result of this interview was a promise on the part of the doctor to furnish Wilson with the history of the pinnacled house of Long Island, in relation to which such a mass of foreign ignorance has been displayed. How well he complied therewith is known to all who have read his admirable letter in the *Ornithology*. We have strong reasons to infer that Wilson as greatly disappointed at the state of society and the condition of literature in America, so far at least as they might be associated with the encouragement of his designs. He had abruptly left his own country the victim of indiscretion,



if not of persecution. He was tinctured with the political excitements of the times of 1790-94, and sought abroad what he deemed not within his reach at home. His whole life,—from its early dawn to its unexpected close,—was a perpetual struggle. Bradford was indeed his friend ; and the venerable horticulturist near Philadelphia, William Bartram, delighted to speak of him to the passing traveller. His firmest resolves were often suddenly abandoned, and as often re-resolved. He was of the *genus irritabile*, and suffered at times from what is occasionally termed a constitutional morbidness. But this itself, doubtless, added to the intensity of his devotion to his sublime pursuits. When men of power and place were indifferent to his glorious plans of Natural Science, he sometimes betrayed a consciousness of the supremacy of his studies and of his own mental superiority. Hence, Republican as he was, he could not brook the frigid apathy of our Republican governour.

“An instructive parallel might be drawn between Wilson and Michaux, the younger. All who knew the latter, remember with admiration his personal intrepidity and hardihood. Like Wilson, he had in reality abided ‘the pelting of the pitiless storm.’ Nothing but unintermitting efforts, under the most discouraging circumstances, enabled him to complete his ‘History of American Forest Trees.’ Michaux, like Wilson, sustained himself under every social privation, and became a tenant of the woods,—scarcely for weeks, months, nay, seasons, participating of the shelter of the domestick roof and the comforts of the culinary fire. He was, moreover, often so *outré* in his appearance, from necessity and habit, as rarely perhaps to command the civilities of refined life,—the metamorphoses of Masouvre being, at times, almost outdone by the peculiarities of his outward attire. But the materials of his *Sylva* having, at length, been brought together from every quarter of our widely-spread country, he repaired with them to Paris ; and there, under the patronage of the *savans* of that metropolis, gave to the world his elegant volumes. He still lives near the Sorbonne, blessed with the remnant of a good constitution, at comfortable ease, enjoying the national bounty willingly granted him for his services, and the students of Nature greet him

as one of their choicest associates. All who visit the *Jardin des Plantes* will learn how much he has enriched it, and behold the *platauus* and the *bignoxia* associated as neighbours, though of distant climes, in amicable rivalry with the lordly *Adansonia*. He has effectively benefited the Arts and rural affairs. He points to the furniture around his dwelling, as examples of the beautiful adaptation of the products of our native woods to the elegancies of the dining-room and the boudoir. He loves America. It was the theatre of his reputation, and her forests yield the loveliest and the loftiest trees. Poor Wilson, on the contrary, with all his high and ennobling aspirations, was ever subjected to the caprices of indigence and want. With the contemplative eye of philosophy, he enjoyed the luxury of interrogating Nature in the most attractive of her forms of animated existence; and he saw, in prospective, the accomplishment of his disinterested designs. But sickness invades him with his unfinished labours before him; and in his premature death, we have a striking illustration of the uncertainty of all human things.

“Exalted as all will pronounce the contributions of Michaux the younger, I think that you should view the subject in another bearing when considering the relative merits of the author of the ‘Forest Trees’ and of the ‘American Ornithology.’ Michaux cannot fairly be looked upon as a pioneer in his vocation. Not a few eminent arboriculturists had long ago given some account of the richness of our forests. Since the time of the Swede, Kalm, Wangenheim had penetrated the various parts of our country the better to understand aright the capabilities of the North American trees for transplanting and propagating in Germany; and had dedicated to his sovereign, the King of Prussia, his large folio, with numerous plates. His drawings, I understand, were made by himself; and when we consider the professional capacity to which he was restricted during our revolutionary war, it is almost marvellous what he effected. The ingenious Masson and the unfortunate Dombey had also touched our shores; and Michaux, the father, having explored the North American regions for a period of more than twelve years, had illustrated in folio, in a manner corresponding to his subject, the oaks of North America.



These, then, with John and William Bartram and others, had somewhat opened the field for subsequent and better-qualified observers ; and Michaux has deservedly secured the triumph.

“How different is the fact as regards that department in which Wilson excelled. Excluding the labours of Catesby in a limited district, with the exception of a casual notice here and there, and the imperfect catalogue of birds by Mr. Jefferson, hardly a correct observation in Ornithology is to be found prior to the appearance of Wilson. The most improved works in our Natural History abounded in narratives of the incantations of the serpent, the *sub-terrene* hibernations of the swallow, and a thousand other absurd stories touching the economy of animals, which, from the plausibility with which they were sustained, caused philosophy itself to be debased by its evidence in such asinine hypotheses. Our birds were songless and without plumage, and the forebodings of the raven was our only melody. In this state of doubt and ignorance, like the dauntless mariner on unknown seas without chart or compass, Wilson appears. With the force of genius, he becomes an original explorer of untrodden wilds of vast extent and peril. Shade and sunshine are alike to him. His pursuit is his happiness. With a diligence surpassing commendation, he enlarges the boundaries of human knowledge ; and with the simplicity of truth, elevates American Ornithology to the certainty of a Science and worthy the cultivation of the highest intellect.

“You will pardon me if, before I conclude, I record one or two circumstances concerning Wilson’s reputation abroad. I allude to the popular and exalted renown he attained almost immediately after the completion of the ‘Ornithology,’ by Mr. Ord, his estimable friend, who published his biography. The works of Wilson had indeed received, from the American press, a few literary notices during the progress of its publication. Governor Clinton had written one or two friendly critiques, and with his wonted earnestness for the promotion of the Science ; and Wilson was gratified that he enjoyed the consideration of a character so conspicuous. But with his transatlantick countrymen, his memory became an object of deep interest. Paisley, his birth-place, had long known him as the author of ‘Watty and Meg,’—

a popular ballad,—which I recollect, in my early schoolboy days, to have been echoed in our streets. I believe he was also the writer of some pathetick verses on the loss of a lovely boy by drowning, entitled ‘Pale Wanderer of the Silent Night’—a production not alluded to in any notice of his Muse that I have seen. Within a year or two after his work was finished, his countrymen at Paisley were urgent in their inquiries of American travellers concerning him and his great production. ‘You must allow, after all,’ said they, ‘that you are indebted to a Scotchman for the true account of the Birds of America. He was our townsman, and it gratifys us to learn any particulars of him. Near this place, he was once a faithful weaver among us; and ‘Watty and Meg’ pleases us even now.’ Perhaps these expressions of popular feeling strack me with the greater force, inasmuch as an occurrence of a somewhat different complexion took place a day or two before. Encountering a Highland lad who was discoursing sweet musick to a song of Burns, I expressed my pleasure by remarking we had no such poetry by American bards. ‘You have not produced Burns,’ replied he; ‘but you have produced a greater man than all Scotland has—Doctor Franklin. He taught the way to make money.’

“When the Dukes John and Charles of Austria attended a converzatione at Sir Joseph Banks in 1816, the royal visitors expressed a desire to examine the library and vast collections in Natural Science of the venerable President of the Royal Society. ‘I have nothing worthy of your especial examination,’ said Sir Joseph, ‘except the ‘American Ornithology’ of Wilson;’ and farther inquiries were dropped upon the inspection of this extraordinary work. ‘Our Radcliff Library is deficient,’ observed Dr. Williams, the Regius Professor of Botany. ‘We have had no opportunity of procuring the ‘American Ornithology’ by Wilson. We learn the work is terminated, and it is remarkable that no Edinburgh or Quarterly has taken notice of it. In what way can we soonest obtain a copy from your country.’

“Thus the sod has scarcely covered the grave of the lamented Wilson, ere his matchless efforts, as Nature’s historian, were the theme of popular and scientifick admirers in regions far remote

and distant from each other. While, therefore, his earthly remains have commingled with their kindred dust,—like the delightful solo of that chief of song, the Mocking-Bird, whose vocal powers amidst the fragrant magnolia he has so eloquently described as unrivalled, his own surpassing labours will ever command the admiration of the disciples of Nature in every part of the habitable globe.

“But I am fearful of enlarging this epistle, and hasten to assure you of my sincere esteem and regard,

“JOHN W. FRANCIS.”

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It is with very special pleasure I am enabled to give here an engraving (after a photograph) of the humble Schoolhouse within which Wilson, for many years, taught and dwelt. I have reason to believe that it has never before been engraved. It is now situated within the shadow of Philadelphia.—G.





**I.—Journal as a Pedlar.**

1789-90.

N O T E .

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For the biographic interest and value of this 'Journal' see our Memorial-Introduction and Essay.—*G.*



# Miscellaneous Prose Writings.

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## I.—JOURNAL.

\* \* \* Before the reader enter upon the following sheets, I think it necessary to inform him, that, signifying some time ago to an intimate friend, an intention I had of traversing the eastern parts of Scotland, he entreated me to keep a Journal ; which, by way of amusement, and to comply with his request, I did, by committing to paper each night, the most remarkable occurrences of the day, interspersed with such descriptions of places, through which I passed, as the shortness of my stay would allow. On my return, a number of acquaintances having examined the scroll, expressed their approbation of it, and requested me to publish it along with the poetical pieces. With their solicitations I have now ventured to comply, in hopes that the perusal of it may be a relaxation to the reader ; and while the novelty of the incidents entertain, the truth of them may perhaps not be uninteresting.

Edinburgh, Sept. 17, 1789.

As youth is the most favourable time to establish a man's good fortune in the world ; and as his success in life depends in a great measure, on his prudent endeavours and unwearied perseverance, I have resolved to make one bold push for the united interests of Prose and Poems. Nor can any one justly blame me for it, since experience has now convinced me, that the merit I am possessed of (which is certainly considerable) might lie for ever buried in obscurity, without such an attempt. I have therefore fitted up a proper budget, consisting of silks, muslins, prints, &c., &c., for the accommodation of those good people who may prove my customers, with a sufficient quantity of Proposals for my poetical friends ; and to prevent those tedious harangues, which otherwise I would be obliged to deliver at every threshold, I have according

to the custom of the more polite pedlars, committed the contents of my Pack to a hand-bill, though in a style somewhat remote from any I have yet seen :—

ADVERTISEMENT EXTRAORDINARY.

FAIR Ladies, I pray for one moment to stay,  
 Until with submission, I tell you,  
 What muslins so curious, for uses so various,  
 A Poet has here brought to sell you.

Here's handkerchiefs charming, book-muslin like ermine,  
 Brocaded, strip'd, corded, and check'd ;  
 Sweet Venus they say, on Cupid's birth-day,  
 In British-made muslins was deck'd.

If these can't content ye, here's muslins in plenty,  
 From one shilling up to a dozen ;  
 That Juno might wear, and more beauteous appear,  
 When she means the old Thund'rer to cozen.

Here are fine jaconets, of numberless sets,  
 With spotted and sprigged festoons ;  
 And lovely tambours, with elegant flow'rs,  
 For bonnets, cloaks, aprons, or gowns.

Now, ye Fair, if ye choose any piece to peruse,  
 With pleasure I'll instantly show it ;  
 If the Pedlar should fail to be favour'd with sale,  
 Then I hope you'll encourage the Poet.

SEPT. 18.—Departed from Edinburgh, designing to cross over to Fifeshire ; changed my resolutions, and proceeded forward to Musselburgh, beneath a most oppressive load. Arrived at this place late in the evening.—MUSSELBURGH (so called from the vast quantities of mussels that are found along the shore) is a small, though a neat town, six miles east from Edinburgh, stretching along the Frith of Forth, which, at this place, may be ten or twelve miles broad. The streets are wide and well paved ; its inhabitants numerous, a great many of whom are butchers, which appears by the numberless carcasses of sheep, calves, cows, &c., that are to be seen suspended in rows at almost every door. Edinburgh is their market, to which, every morning, their stores are conveyed. This day saw several troops of dragoons reviewed, which made a formidable appearance, on an extensive level green,



that spreads along the shore, where the game of golph is much practised by parties of gentlemen ; and is, in my opinion, a more healthy than entertaining amusement.

SEPT. 19.—I have this day collected a few subscriptions. Encountered in my excursions through the town, with a son of the Muses, who, on looking over the Proposals and specimen, snarled at some expression that displeased him. I, in defence, mentioned a similar phrase which Thomson had used. “Aye, aye,” said he, “Thomson’s was poetry, but this is none ;” and then, after a little meditation and muttering to himself, he altered the line, which I, to humour him, confessed to be a beautiful amendment. Pleased with this, he set down his own name, and, smiling, said, “D—n me ! I’ll procure some subscribers for you.” In the course of our conversation, he told me that he had finished several pieces ; among the rest, two farces, and an English translation of the ‘Gentle Shepherd.’ This day an old lady, whom I had importuned in vain to add to the list of subscribers, gave me a solemn advice, that as I was but a young author and unacquainted with the world, not to spend the money I might make, on women and wine. “I am exceedingly obliged to you, Madam,” returned I, “for the advice you are pleased to give me ; but if I meet with no better encouragement from the world than I have received from your ladyship, I believe your good counsel will be superfluous.”

Another gentleman’s mansion I was approaching when the owner appeared, whom I saluted, presenting him the Proposals. He stared at the paper some moments, as if it had been a monster ; then, with a contemptuous sneer, exclaimed, “O Ch—st ! I’ll have nothing to do with it—some d—ned stuff or other.” I met also with a school-master, who seemed to be a son of Bacchus, Learning, and Snuff ; for after several good observations on the specimen and an enormous draught of snuff, he declared he would most certainly take a copy. “But, remember,” says he, “by Jupiter, we,—we,—will offer up one half of its price at the shrine of Bacchus.”

SEPT. 21.—FISHER-ROW. This place is separated from Musselburgh only by a river, over which is a wooden bridge,

three feet broad and near one hundred and fifty long ; the breadth of the channel being occasioned by the flowing of the sea. The inhabitants of this place are mostly fishers, from whom the town takes its name. While I staid here, a very melancholy accident happened at a place called Roslin, some miles up the river. A newly married couple had been on a visit to a friend's house, where they staid till the night was far advanced. In coming home they had the river to cross, over which went a feeble wooden bridge, railed only at one side. The night being dark and stormy, the bridge but narrow, and the river swelled by the rains, her husband desired her to hold by his coat while he went before ; which she accordingly attempted to do, but missing her step, plunged headlong into the current. The husband, imagining that he did not feel her behind him, and unable to hear for the noise which the wind made among the trees, turned quickly about, and ran to the other end of the bridge, thinking she had staid behind ; but not finding her there, he called her by name, as loud and as long as he could, "Peggy ! Peggy !" but, alas ! Peggy was gone, never more to return. The unhappy man went home in a case not to be described, and was seized with a fever, which, in a short time, rendered him delirious. Next day the corpse of this unfortunate young woman was found near Fisher-row harbour, where the river discharges itself into the sea, stripped of everything of value. The body was opened by the surgeons, when it was found that she was six months advanced in her pregnancy. The child and its mother I saw both decently interred by her friends next day.

While I was traversing from house to house, I was told, by almost every body, of a taylor, a great Poet, who, as the women and fishers informed me, could make a poem of any thing. Curious to see this prodigy of wit, I sought out his hut, and found it. On my entrance, I perceived a little shrunk creature, perched, cross-legged, on a table, making his head and hand keep time with one another. I boldly entered, and asked what he would buy. "Nothing," says he. "Have you any strong gray thread ?" I told him I was sorry that I had none. "Any needles or thimbles ?" "I am just out of them at present." "Then," replied he,

“you have nothing for me.” “No! perhaps I may have something to suit you for all that.” “No, no,” returned he, and fell a-whistling. Here a pause ensued. At length, said I, “you are certainly acquainted with the rules of composition, friend, or you would not whistle that tune so justly.” “Composition!” said he. “Do you know what composition is?” “Not I; but I have heard poets and fiddlers, when speaking of a song or tune, call it composition.” “You are not far wrong,” continued he. “Did you ever read any poetry?” “Yes, I have read the *Wife of Beith*, and ballads, and the *Psalms*, and many others.” “And do you understand them?” “Excellently,” replied I, “and I [am] delighted to read metre.” “Lay down your pack for a moment, then,” says he, nimbly sliding from the table, “I’ll show you something curious. You’ll perhaps not have heard of me, but I am a bit of a poet; I make verses myself sometimes.” Hereupon pulling out the drawer of an old chest, and rustling some time among a parcel of papers, he presented me with a printed piece, entitled—*King Crispianus’ March through Fisher-row*,—which I read aloud with seeming rapture; though, at the same time, I could scarce suppress a continued succession of yawnings, while the exulting author stared steadfastly in my face the whole time; and seeing me admire the first so much, tortured me with a second, and a third, all equally sublime. I now began to interrogate him as to his knowledge of poetry, and found him entirely ignorant of every thing save rhyme. Happening to ask him if ever he had read any of *Pope* or *Milton’s* pieces, he told me he never had, for he did not understand one word of *Latin*. I showed him my *Proposals*, asked him to subscribe, and said I knew the author. He read part of them with excessive laughter, declared that the author was certainly a learned fellow, and that he would cheerfully subscribe, but his wife was such a devil, that if she knew of him doing any thing without her approbation, there would be no peace in the house for months to come: “And by the bye,” says he, “we are most dismally poor. I assure you there has been nothing with us this many a day, but potatoes and herring.” I told him that poverty was the characteristic of a poet. “You are right,” says he, “and for that very reason I am proud of being

poor." I left this votary of rhyme, and went through the rest of the town, meeting with no other adventure worthy of being remembered.

SEPT. 22.—Left this place, and proceeded eastwards about three miles, to Prestonpans. This town is larger but not so regular as the last, neither are the houses so good, but rather ruinous; the streets on account of the numerous salt-pans, black and narrow, and the buildings, if so they may be called, dismally exhibiting the effects of Time's all-devouring jaws, tottering on the brink of dissolution, and threatening every gale of wind to be the eternal residences of their possessors. About a mile to the southward of this, the battle of Prestonpans was fought, where the gallant Colonel Gardiner fell, whose house stands near the place of action. Leaving this place, with little success, I pursued my way eastward, passing a little village on the shore, called Cockenzie, composed chiefly of salt-pans and the workmen's huts. Five miles farther east, I came to another village called Aberlady. Here I propose to spend the night and moralize on the toils and disappointments of the day.

SEPT. 23.—Rose by day-break, and proceeded on my pilgrimage. The country for about three miles to the east of this, along the shore, is a sandy level, interspersed with little hillocks, and inhabited by innumerable swarms of rabbits, under the dominion of an old weaver, whose sole prerogative and occupation it is, in the winter season, to apprehend, execute, and dispose of them to the best advantage.

Entered about nine o'clock the town of North-Berwick, a seaport, situated at the extremity of a long sandy bay. About half-a-mile south from this, a high hill rises, named North-Berwick-Law, and is seen at a vast distance both by sea and land.

With much difficulty I reached its top, on which is erected the two jaw-bones of a whale, and over them a pendant stream in the wind. The view from this is really beautiful; the wide German ocean spreading in the east far as the eye can reach. The county of Fife and wild enormous ranges of mountains to the north, while the Frith of Forth stretching to the west, lies spotted with rocks, ships, and small islands. After satisfying my curiosity,

descend to North-Berwick, where I intend to repose for this night.

SEPT. 24.—Left this place, and continued eastwards, passing along a very steep and rocky shore, till I came to a place called Comly-bay, where a few solitary fishermen live. At the eastern extremity of this bay, the shore rises so high that I was forced to take to hands and feet, and climb for a considerable way, till I reached the summit of it. Here I had a near and an agreeable view of the Bass, a large rock, almost circular, rising out of the sea to the dreadful height of 600 feet, and distant from the shore about a mile, giving the spectator an awful idea of its Almighty Founder, “Who weigheth the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance ;” who by one word raiseth into existence this vast universe, with all these unwieldy rocks ; and Who will, when His almighty goodness shall think fit, with one word, command them to their primitive nothing. The ruins of an old castle are still to be seen on its south side, which was formerly used as a place of confinement to many of the persecuted Presbyterians. Prodigious numbers of Solan geese build among the cliffs of the rock. The method used to catch their young is somewhat dangerous. As soon as it is perceived that the young are arrived at their proper bigness, which they do ere capable of flying (this happens generally about the middle of July), then the climber has a rope fixed round his middle with a feather pillow bound on his breast, to prevent sharp pointed crags from wounding him in his ascent or descent. Being thus secured, he is let down over the verge of the rock, till he come to the nests of the geese, while flying and screaming around him in vast multitudes and of nameless kinds, deploring the loss of their unfortunate young. A considerable number of boats are stationed below, ready to receive the fowls, as soon as he drives them from their holes. This is easily effected. The birds unable to support themselves, and falling from such a height, are so stunned, that before they can recover themselves, they are snatched from the sea and secured. This method they yearly repeat, sending those caught to Edinburgh, where they are generally sold at two shillings and two shillings and sixpence each. The climber, who, at this season, resides constantly on the island,

has a little hut built, where he sells liquor, bread, cheese, &c., for the accommodation of those sportsmen who visit the rock for the diversion of shooting. The shore all along here is exceedingly high and rugged, while a ceaseless surf rolls impetuously among the precipitated fragments below. Proceeding a mile further east, I came to the remains of an old fortification, known by the name of Tamtallan. It is built on the verge of a high shore overhanging the sea, nearly opposite to the Bars, and distant from it a long mile, composed of three towers, about sixty paces from each other, and joined by a strong high wall, all seemingly whole, except the west tower, which hangs in ruins. I measured the wall, and found it in many places more than ten feet thick, and strongly cemented. The whole building is about six storeys, quite inaccessible towards the sea, and seems to have been deeply trenched toward the land. This place and the Bass, are both the property of Sir Hugh Dalrymple of Leuchie, proprietor of a large estate in this country, of that name, and superior of the town of North-Berwick.

Having sufficiently examined this ancient structure, I proceeded forwards, and night coming on, arrived at a small village called Whitekirk, and obtained lodgings in a little ale-house. While I sat conversing with the landlord, he told me the following story that happened to a family in the neighbourhood, which, as it exhibits a remarkable occurrence of Providence, I shall relate. About six months ago, the master of the house, who was by trade a fisher, fell sick, and continued in a lingering way until about three weeks ago, when his distemper growing worse, increased to that degree, that all hopes of recovery were gone. In these circumstances he prepared himself for his dissolution, in a manner that became a Christian, and agreeable to the character he had all along been distinguished by when in health and vigour. Meantime his wife was pregnant and drew near the time of her delivery, and it gave the poor man no small uneasiness to think that he should not see his last offspring; and it was one of his fervent petitions to Heaven, that he might be spared until that time. Some short time after this, he grew extremely ill, and all his relations were called in to take their last farewell. While they stood



round his bed expecting his immediate departure, his wife was taken suddenly ill, and, in less than an hour was delivered of twins, which the dying man no sooner understood, than he made signs to them to send for the minister, who accordingly, in a short time came. He then attempted to rise in the bed, but his strength was exhausted. Hereupon one of his daughters went up to the bed behind him, and supported his hands, until he held up both the children, first one and then the other. Then kissing them both, delivered them over to their mother, and reclining his head softly on the pillow, expired.

SEPT. 23.—Set forward on my way to Dunbar, seeing little by the way worthy of notice, only now and then two whale jaw-bones erected at the entrance to some distinguished farm-houses, the thick end fixed in the ground and the two points meeting at top, forming a kind of arch, capable of letting the highest coach or loaded cart pass thro'; being generally from sixteen to eighteen feet in height. Passed this day several elegant farm-houses, the politeness of whose inhabitants claims little of my praise; who, taking them in general, are so lost to humanity and discretion, that when a poor pedlar approaches their sacred mansions, engages and vanquishes a surly tyger-like mastiff (who guards the door, and bears his master's hospitality in his countenance), and even forces his way to the kitchen, he is no sooner in, than, as if they were afraid that he brought the pestilence along with him, he is huffed out, and the door clapt behind him. Such are the effects of pride and luxury; such the effects that wealth and independence produce in the dispositions of the illiterate and the uncultivated. On the other hand, the poor cottager welcomes you into his little hut, invites you to sit down, and even presses you to partake of his homely fare, seeming happy to have it in his power to be hospitable to a stranger. Met with nobody this day but had more books than they made a good use of.

SEPT. 24.—This morning rose early to take a view of the town (Dunbar), which is pretty large; the main street broad, and running from north to south, contains the only buildings of any note. The Provost's house closes the view at the north end, fronted with a row of trees, making a very neat appearance.



Several narrow lanes lead down to the shore, chiefly possessed by fishers. At the west end of the harbour they have lately built a battery of stone, in the form of a half-moon, mounting seventeen twelve-pounders. This is the effect of Paul Jones's appearance in the Frith last war, who came so near this place with some of his ships, as to demolish some of the chimney tops, and put the inhabitants in a terrible consternation. They are also building a new pier from the battery, which will certainly be attended with a vast expence, and even without affording general content. A little to the west of this are still to be seen the ruins of the castle of Dunbar, built on a rock that juts into the sea, hollowed with gloomy caves, through which, in a storm, the waves roar horribly; which, joined to the ruins above, forms a most dismal appearance.

SEPT. 25.—Having done some little business in this place, and there being no other towns to the east or south, for a considerable way, have bargained with the master of a sloop, with whom I intend to embark for Burntisland, in Fifeshire, a town about thirty miles from this, and almost opposite to Edinburgh.

SEPT. 26.—Went on board early this morning for Burntisland, with a good gale astern; passed the Bass, and several other small islands, and landed at Burntisland, after a pleasant passage of six hours.

SEPT. 28.—BURNTISLAND. In this place the lover of ruins would be highly entertained, when whole streets are to be seen in solitary desolation. They have an excellent harbour here, to which, in a hard gale of easterly wind, the shipping in Leith-roads repair. Some time ago a thick-silk manufactory was established here, and seemed for a while to prosper, but on account of some differences arising among the partners, has now dwindled to a name. About a mile to the westward of this is a petrifying spring, which I had the curiosity to visit. The water is hard and well tasted; and all along the shore, for the space of a quarter of a mile, are to be seen the produce of the spring: rocks hang frightfully tottering over one another, where the different courses of the stream has been before. In some places I found the stone forming, resembling those pendicles of ice that hang by the house eaves. This is used as a watering-place by the ships of war lying

in the roads, and other vessels outward bound. This town being nearly opposite to Leith, a passage-boat goes from this every day, save Sunday, and even then, if encouragement offers. The water is seven miles broad, and a single passenger pays sixpence. A pretty large sugar-work is also on foot here, seemingly to thrive. This evening, went down and took a view of a strange vessel, called the **EXPERIMENT**, launched from the sands of Leith, built on an entire new construction, and has been in this harbour these twelve months; measuring about one hundred feet in length, being almost two distinct vessels under one deck, but with two keels, two rudders, and five masts, and seems to have been the monstrous production of some mathematician's delirious pericranium. It was built at a vast expence, and without any visible intention or use, but that of an experiment.

SEPT. 29.—Went two miles along the shore, eastward, to Kinghorn. On my way visited a famous Spa well, whose waters are deservedly esteemed by people languishing under a consumption. The flow of water is but small, seeping out from a cleft rock, which rises above it thirty or forty feet. On spring-tides the sea flows nearly up to the well, beside which is a convenient seat cut out from the rock, where you can sit and receive the water in a vessel from the spring, and near that a large cave enters the rocks, where you may be secured from the storm; so that here is at once shelter for the traveller, drink for the thirsty, a seat for the weary, and health for the sick, all from the rough but bounteous hand of nature. About half a mile to the westward of this, on the shore which hangs gloomily above the sea, is the place where Alexander III. was killed by a fall from his horse, while on a hunting party; which place still retains the name of "The king's wud en." Kinghorn is but a small place; its inhabitants subsisting chiefly by the passage, which is the most frequented on the Frith, a considerable number of boats still passing and repassing to and from the Petty-cur, a harbour about half a mile west from the town. In a large boat the passenger pays sixpence; in a pinnace, which is most convenient in a smooth sea, tenpence. The town is composed of an irregular assemblage of poor, low, ruinous, tile-covered huts; but if miserable without, still more so within; almost every

house being so dark, black, and dirty, that I wrong them not to style each the cave of misery and desolation. The inhabitants are almost all boatmen, and their whole commerce being with strangers, whom perhaps they may never see again, makes them avaricious, and always on the catch. If a stranger comes to town at night, intending to go over next morning, he is taken into a lodging. One boatman comes in, sits down, promises to call you in the morning, assists you to circulate the liquor, and after a great deal of loquacity, departs. In a little another enters, and informs you that the fellow who had just now left you, goes not over at all; but that he goes, and for a glass of gin he will awake you and take you along with him. Willing to be up in time, you generously treat him. According to promise, you are awakened on the morning, and assured that you have time enough to take breakfast, in the middle of which hoarse roarings alarm you, that the boat is just going off. You start up, call for your bill, the landlord appears, charges you like a nobleman—there is no time for scrupling—you are hurried away by the boatman on the one hand, and genteelly extorted by the landlord on the other, who pockets his money, and bids you haste lest you lose your passage; and perhaps after all, when you get on board, you are detained an hour or more by the sailors waiting for more passengers. Such, and a thousand more mean tricks, are practised on the unsuspecting stranger, and all under a show of the most extreme kindness. While here I inquired for Pattie Birnie, the famous fiddler, and was told a great many anecdotes of him, by some of the old people who remember to have seen him. I applied to a literary character in this town, with a subscription-paper, but he told me he did not find himself inclined to meddle with it, saying, I should apply my talents to prose-writing, for he doubted much if I would meet with great encouragement in the poetical branch, so many good poets having transmitted us pieces inimitable by succeeding ages. I told him if we never attempted to rival them, we made them seemingly inimitable indeed; but when young genius, fired with the love of that applause which former poets had met with, strove to attract the observation of the world and soar above their progenitors, I should imagine they merited

encouragement for having spirit enough to make the attempt. He said it was ambition to make such attempts, and to encourage ambition was not right; and ere I could return an answer, he slipt to his room, while I came away, cursing his stupidity. To several others I have applied, but they know not what poetry is, so cannot, as they said, subscribe. Returned back to Burntisland after sunset.

SEPT. 30.—This morning a sloop foundered a mile of the shore, in attempting to get into the harbour. The cries of her unhappy men alarmed the crew of a cutter lying at a small distance, who perceived two persons clinging by the mast. A boat was immediately sent off to their relief, but though she rowed several times round the wreck, could discover no appearance of man or boy. Sudden indeed are the transitions from time to eternity, yet awful and important the change! How happy, how unspeakably happy they, who are prepared for such a warning! Who through the jaws of death are received into never-ceasing joy and inconceivable delight! But alas! how deplorable the situation of those, who in such extremities, by the brittle thread of life, hang over an eternal world of woe! To them death stares in ten thousand despairing forms, to them death is unutterable horror, and to them how precious would be one hour, or one moment.

OCT 1.—This being the day set apart for electing the magistrates of a neighbouring town, the whole council, consisting of a parcel of weavers, shoemakers, tailors, &c., assembled. After the election, they adjourned to a public-house to dine, where the jolly god Bacchus, or his representative, aquavitæ, raised such an uproar in their brains, that tables were levelled, chairs broken, bowls dashed to pieces, and stoups and glasses flew thro' the room with such rapidity, as threatened destruction to whatever they encountered; and one taylor, in particular, forgetting himself so much as to believe he was provost, began to exercise his authority in loud commands to silence, until he should address them. All his endeavours to obtain silence proving vain, he dealt the wand of justice around him with such mettle and impartiality, that roused to vengeance, the whole assembly began, like the Philistines of old, to cudgeling one another. Mars swelled the horrid

scene, while Discord clapt her sooty wings over them. Broken heads, shins, and noses, brought many a one to the floor, where they weltered, if not among their own blood, among their own p—s, till sleep arrested the weary warriors in many a drousy attitude.

OCT. 2.—I have this day, I believe, measured the height of a hundred stairs, and explored the recesses of twice that number of miserable habitations ; and what have I gained by it? Only two shillings of worldly pelf, but an invaluable treasure of observation. In this elegant dome, wrapt up in glittering silks, and stretched on the downy sofa, recline the fair daughters of wealth and indolence. The ample mirror, flowery floor, and magnificent couch, their surrounding attendants, while suspended in his wiry habitation above, the shrill-pip'd canary warbles to enchanting echoes. Within the confines of that smoky hovel, hung round with squadrons of his brother artists, the pale-fac'd weaver plies the resounding lay, or launches the melancholy, murmuring shuttle. Lifting this simple latch, and stooping for entrance to the miserable hut, there sits Poverty and ever-moaning Disease, clothed in dunghill-rags, and ever shivering over the fireless chimney. Ascending this stair, the voice of joy bursts on my ear. The bridegroom and bride, surrounded by their jocund companions, circle the sparkling glass and humorous joke, or join in the raptures of the noisy dance, the squeaking fiddle breaking through the general uproar in sudden intervals, while the bounding floor groans beneath its unruly load. Leaving these happy mortals, and ushering into this silent mansion, a more solemn, a striking object presents itself to my view. The windows, the furniture, and every thing that could lend one cheerful thought, are hung in solemn white, and there, stretch'd pale and lifeless, lies the awful corpse ; while a few weeping friends sit black and solitary near the breathless clay. In this other place, the fearless sons of Bacchus extend their brazen throats in shouts like bursting thunder, to the praise of their gorgeous chief. Opening this door, the lonely matron explores for consolation her Bible ; and in this house the wife brawls, the children shriek, and the poor husband bids me depart, lest his termagant's fury should vent itself on me. In



short, such an inconceivable variety occurs to my observation in real life, that would were they moralized upon, convey more maxims of wisdom, and give a juster knowledge of mankind, than whole volumes of lives and adventures, that perhaps never had a being, except in the prolific brains of their fantastic authors.

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The foregoing Journal relates only to the collecting of subscribers; what follows is a short Narrative of the reception he afterwards met with from these gentlemen, and is inserted here to gratify the wishes of almost all the encouragers of this edition, to whom the Author returns his most sincere and grateful acknowledgments.

THAT frequent reflections and prudent remarks on the daily occurrences of life, are not only exceedingly useful, but highly necessary, for conducting us safely thro' the wiles of the world, is a truth long since avowed, and which none but fools, or those destitute of common sense, have ever dared to deny. In the hurry and heat of affairs, we are apt to be deluded by cunning, or flattered by hypocrisy, blinded by the fire and turbulence of passion, or imposed on through the softness of unsuspecting simplicity; but in our retired moments, a calm retrospect of transactions, displays things to our view as they really are; shews us where we have erred and where suffered, convicts us of our folly, applauds us for our prudence and stings us with remorse, or sheds a gleam of joy over our minds at the remembrance of past actions.

Nor is a just knowledge of mankind less necessary for our spiritual as well as temporal interest. Seduced by the fair smiles and deep-laid schemes of men, we fall a prey to their avarice and cruelty; and captivated by the outward glare and superficial glitter of the pleasures, vanity and ambition of this world, we forget our only true good, and rivet ourselves to earth and its deceiving allurements. A thorough knowledge of mankind, on the other hand, is of infinite benefit. We see through their schemes, and easily guard against their wiles; we know the folly of being too sanguine in our hopes, and can easily compute how far interest, ambition, pride and prejudice, preponderate against all the other nobler passions of the soul. This takes the sting from neglect, and makes disappointment tolerable. Convinced,

by the experience of ourselves and others, of the madness and unsatisfying delights of all sublunary pleasures, we can look with contempt on them all, labouring for those whose stability is eternal.

But how, it may be asked, is a thorough knowledge of mankind to be obtained? Not from the romantic pages of our novels and adventures. These volatile pieces show us rather what is possible might be, than what really exists. The knowledge of the world can no more be learned from them, than the appearance of New Holland could be known by surveying some imaginary landscape. We might there see the mountains, ocean, woods and rivers depicted with never so much art, yet, were a mariner to set out in hopes of meeting the same prospect there, and steer by this pretended chart, I fear he would make but a sorry voyage. So fares it with the man, who full of the enthusiastic notions of life he has imbibed from these wonderful productions, rushes into the world. What a train of unforeseen misfortunes has he to encounter! and what complicated miseries does he involve himself in! till sober experience opens his eyes, and sets him on his guard against their fraud. It is, therefore, by personal intercourse with the world, that its true character can be known; and as my employment affords me advantages of this kind that few others enjoy, I shall here relate a few facts that occurred to me in the course of several days' peregrination, on my first commencing Author.

Having furnished my budget with what necessary articles might be required, equipt with a short oaken plant, I yielded my shoulders to the load, and by day-break left the confines of our ancient Metropolis.

The morning was mild, clear and inviting. A gentle shower, which had fallen amid the stillness of night, besprinkled the fields and adjoining meadows, exposing them to the eye clad with brightest green and glittering with unnumbered globes of dew. Nature seemed to smile on my intended expedition. I hailed the happy omen, and with a heart light as the lark that hovered over my head, I passed the foot of Salisbury Rocks, and, directing my course towards Dalkeith, launched among the first farms and cottages that offered, The country here is rich and uncommonly



fertile, producing an early crop, and amply repaying the husbandman's toil with a plentiful return. A few rocky eminences rise, crowned with clusters of firs, which by no means offend the eye, but afford a striking contrast between the level and the rugged, the blessed and the bare. Upon the top of one of these heights stands the castle of Craig Millar, where Mary Queen of Scots was some time confined. It now lies in solitary ruins. Two miles to the southward is the beautiful estate of Rockville, surrounded by most romantic pleasure-grounds; and all along, on every hand, the most beautiful prospects presented themselves to the view, till I reached Dalkeith, where I took up lodging in an old jolly widow's, whose house I understood, was the general resort of travellers. At first sight of my lusty hostess I was prepossessed in her favour. Her height was something more than that of the common size, but seemingly diminished by her enormous corpulence. Her eyes were piercing, and bespoke a mind not unacquainted with the world; she spoke with a masculine sharpness, and when interrupted in her discourse with the queries of the servant-maid, or displeased with any of her proceedings, would raise her voice, and pour forth such a flood of exclamations and abuse, as would have puzzled the powers of Dunbar or any of his cotemporary rivals even to imitate. This done, the exhausted matron would resume her story with all the serene composure of tranquility, wiping the oily drops from her face, and wondering at the warmth of the weather. In the course of these long-winded narratives, she generally held forth on the many losses she had met with, the hardships, difficulties, and almost impossibilities she had encountered and overcome, interspersing all with anecdotes of her own wanton humour and activity, at which she would burst out into the most extravagant fits of laughter, till interrupted by a vehement attack of the cough. Sometimes too, she would entertain me with a detail of the adventures she had been engaged in, when in the flush of youth and beauty; her amours and courtships, the love such and such a one bore her, "who is now in the dust," and the many stratagems she had used with these enamoured gallants; but as this was a theme inexhaustible (at least to her sex), often without a period, and almost always

uninteresting, I strove, when I found her entering on this subject, to divert her imagination to some other; for, as the honest countryman, when he heard the parson divide his text into one hundred and sixty three heads and branches, rose hastily to his feet, and being asked what he meant, "I am going home," says he, "for my night-cap, for I find we must stay here till morning," so, when you hear a female enter into a relation of her love-intrigues, you may prepare, if no effectual interruption occurs, for the horrors of a two hours' tedious recital. After repaying my officious landlady with a glass of brandy for her marvellous memoirs, I retired to bed, and, early next morning, rose to take a view of the town. Dalkeith is situated in a fruitful country, six miles south from Edinburgh, on a rising ground, between the two rivers north and south Esk; these joining a little below the town, and running north-east for three or four miles, fall into the sea between Musselburgh and Fisher-row. The town, though not large, is neat, the streets wide, and the front houses, in general, genteel. The main street, which runs from east to west, is terminated on the east by the gate leading to the Duke of Buccleuch's palace, whose eldest son inherits the title of Earl of Dalkeith. The inhabitants yearly celebrate the Duke's birth-day by a numerous procession of the trades through the town, ringing of bells, &c., &c. Their weekly market is held on Thursday, when immense quantities of oat-meal pour in from the south, at the distance of 20 or 30 miles, is sold to extensive dealers, and immediately despatched to Edinburgh and the west country. Their Established church, is a black, ruinous pile of Gothic architecture, inelegant in itself, unwholesome to its frequenters; and a disgrace to the town. They have likewise four other places of public worship, viz., a Burgher, Antiburgher, Methodist and Relief meeting-house. The people are in general, poor, laborious and illiterate, nor are their morals, especially those of the fair sex, much assisted by their intercourse with the dragoons, three or four troop of whom generally reside here, for the conveniency of oats and pasturage.

When we are highly elevated on the wings of hope, if balked in our designs or deprived of our expectations, we sink the deeper

in despondence. This was partly the case with me, in regard to this place. I had looked round on the elegant buildings, valuable shops, and genteel company that surrounded me, and silently said to myself, Surely in this place, unhackneyed with new publications, where there seems to be so many people of taste, and where the appearance of an author disposing of his own works may seem a novelty, surely in such a place as this, I cannot fail of success. Big with these enthusiastic hopes, I put a volume in my pocket and went immediately to the shop of a bookseller, the only one in town. I found him dozing over some old tattered papers (perhaps the MSS. of some forlorn and penniless author), explained to him my business, showed him the book, and wished to know if he would purchase a few copies, or recommend me to any literary characters in town, whose inclination led them to the study of poetry. He took the book carelessly from me, whirled over the leaves again and again, enquired the price, and, in a tone that bespoke the meanness of his soul, told me he would take one of them at half-price. That, though he scarcely believed ever it would sell, yet, he would be so far good to me as take one of them on these terms. This was delivered with an air that seemed to display the greatness of his generosity, and to require my thanks in return. I eyed the avaricious wretch for a moment with a smile of contempt, and asked if he was really sincere in what he said. Protesting upon his honour that he was, and that he would meddle with them on no other conditions, I thanked him for his mighty kindness, and left his shop with a hearty scorn for his narrowness of soul. The next I made my addresses to, was a certain pedagogue, disabled of one leg, who, hopping up to me, enquired with a strange stare and impudence of look, what I wanted with him? This I explained as briefly as I could, and putting the book into his hand, desired he would be pleased to take a look of it. He took the poems—perused them for a few moments, but on observing his wife approaching, gave me them back hastily, and saying he had no use for any of these things, hirpled into his noisy hut again.

The reception I met with from these and the greatest part to whom I applied, dispirited me so much, that, sunk in despondence,

I stole to my lodgings, and there sat, sadly ruminating on the unpromising face of my affairs. I had ransacked the whole town for traffic, in vain; I had solicited the encouragement of the literary part of it with equal success; and when I directed my course to the palace, hopeful that I might there be more fortunate, I was repulsed by the porter, who assured me, that none of my occupation were allowed admittance. This I afterwards found out to be false. However, I had still one project, which, whatever the event might be, I was determined to put in execution. I had heard much said (and I believe justly) in praise of her Grace, the Duchess. I had heard her kindness, bounty and generosity exalted to the heavens. Scarce a poor inhabitant but gave me some affecting account of her sympathy, and produced to my view the effects of her charity, while the tears of gratitude glittered in their eye. Roused by these considerations, and animated with fresh hopes by the amiable character of this dignified personage, I at once resolved to remit her an address, representing, in the most modest terms, my solitary situation, little doubting but her unbounded generosity would extend itself to an unfortunate author.

With these resolutions, I took the pen, and wrote the following address.

*To Her Grace, the Duchess of——.*

MADAM,—The person who has the honour of presenting the inclosed poetical hand-bill, humbly begs your gracious acceptance and perusal. The goods which it enumerates, your humble servant carries along with him, that he may, by their means, have an easier opportunity of soliciting the favour of the literary world, for a volume of poems he has just now published. May it therefore please your Grace, to allow, for once, a young poet to spread his elegant assortment at your feet—to entreat your acceptance of a copy of his poetical performances, and your pardon for this intrusion, which will for ever bind him,

Madam,

Your, &c., &c.

This I sealed, and with a trifle bribed the porter to get it con-

veyed safely to her Grace. The janitor's frozen features softened at the appearance of the specie ; he assured me of his best endeavours to assist me, and desired I would call about the evening, when without doubt I would be introduced.

The evening arrived, and I punctually attended. We met, and the sum of his intelligence was this, that he had got it delivered into the Duchess' own hand, but no answer had as yet appeared ; that, however, he had been, and still would be, indefatigable in my interest, and intreated me to call to-morrow morning. This I promised to do, although I had already, in my own mind, interpreted her Grace's silence as a too plain answer, that once more dismissed my hopes.

I passed the rest of the evening in observing the bustle and preparations every one was making for the Fair, which was to commence next day ; and alighting on an acquaintance, a native of the town, whom I had formerly seen in the west country, we retired to an adjoining public-house, where we might have a pint and a little chat to pass the evening. Here he informed me that the ensuing market continued for three days, and to encourage pedlars and other dealers to attend, the Duchess herself made it a rule every year to take a walk through the Fair and purchase some little article from each, and that to-morrow's afternoon she would, according to her usual custom, appear in the market for that purpose. Of this intimation I meant to make some use, and resolved, that if no answer arrived prior to that time, to watch the offered opportunity, and make my address to her Grace in person. Fixt in this determination, I came home and ascended to my room, there to lose for a while, the remembrance of my cares in the downy arms of repose. As soon as the first glimpses of dawn peeped into my chamber, I rose and took a short walk to the fields, to enjoy the serenity of the morn and the richness of the prospect that every where surrounded me. There is something in the mild, agreeable period of a summer's morning, peculiarly pleasing to persons of a contemplative disposition. In that delightful season of dewy serenity, the mind is disengaged from the tumultuous cares and uproars of life, her action renewed, and her powers invigorated by the refreshing influence of sleep. The balmy



fragrance that perfumes the air ; the promiscuous notes of the feathered tribes, that, warbled in simple harmony from the branches, steal on the ear ; the brook glittering as it murmurs along beneath the early rays ; the artless whistling of the distant ploughman, and the universal smile that all nature wears around, conveys a secret, serene joy, a blissful tranquillity, that imagination wants language to describe. The soul is then, as it were, half relieved of her corporeal load. Contemplation gazes undisturbed, and Fancy, exulting Fancy, is for ever on the wing.

Then it is, that the poor, fortuneless favourites of genius steal forth amid the dewy solitudes, to admire the astonishing wonders of nature, to give a loose to the excursive faculties of imagination, and to enjoy the transporting pleasures that arise from those sublime and delightful studies ; pleasures, that the grovelling sons of interest and grubs of this world, know as little of and are as incapable of enjoying, as those miserable spirits who are doomed to perpetual darkness, can the glorious regions and eternal delights of paradise.

The day was now advancing, and the country people from every quarter were thronging to the Fair. The road seemed to move with black cattle ; whole flocks of sheep successively advanced to the town, and about mid-day the streets were all bustle and commotion. The rustics in hodden-gray stalked through the general hubbub, devouring with their eyes the wonderful curiosities that were exposed to view on the chapman's stalls, which now lined both sides of the streets for a considerable length.

Universal uproar prevailed everywhere among the tumultuous crowds ; drums beating, pipes sounding, fiddlers playing in expectation of engagements, and all the other confusion that on like occasions every where prevail. On this hand was shouted, "Here's the rare gingerbread"—on the other, "Aberdeen new almanacks"—"A full, true and particular account of a barbarous bloody and inhuman"—"Cast your eye a little farther, there you have a grand view of the"—"Now's the time to try your luck ; one in who makes two." These, and other exclamations were distinguishable, the rest was all indistinct rumour and confusion. The town now exhibited the appearance of trade, and merchandizing

was carried on with spirit. Meanwhile, my comrade and I had hung our room with shawls, silk handkerchiefs, muslins, printed cloth, ribbons, and a profusion of other gaudy finery, which, on the whole, made no inconsiderable appearance. We had erected shelves round the room for the bulk of our goods, and from a large window that fronted the street, displayed a magnificent flag, composed of some elegant shawls, muslins, &c., elevated on a pole, and underneath on a sheet of pasteboard, was painted in conspicuous characters, "A Sale of Muslins and Prints."

While we were thus busied in exposing and disposing of our wares, happening to throw my eye to the window, I observed a group of gazing country folks encircling some ladies of distinction, and was immediately told by one of my customers, that it was the Duchess. I flew down stairs, mingled with the crowd, and found her Grace officiously engaged in receiving some silver trinkets she had purchased from an old chapman, who seemed to treat her with the utmost deference, and as she left his stall, making a most submissive and ridiculous bow, he turned to the bystanders, and chinking the money in his hand, gave them a look, so expressive of extreme joy and secret rapture, that excited the mirth of all around. Had Hogarth been there, to have arrested the features and made them his own, his piece might have formed an everlasting fund of laughter. At this instant I pressed through the crowd, and respectfully approaching, informed her that I was the person who had sent her Grace the letter last night. She paused for a few moments, and then inquired if I had any goods in the Fair. I replied in the affirmative, and, pointing to the flag, told her I had a beautiful and elegant assortment of muslins within that room, where I would be happy to be honoured with her Grace's presence. She paused again for a moment, and saying in a tone that pierced me to the soul, "I don't want any of these things," turned with her attendants to the next stall. You whose souls are susceptible of the finest feelings, who are elevated to rapture with the least dawnings of hope, and sunk in despondence by the slightest thwarting of your expectations, think what I felt on this occasion.

With a mixture of grief and indignation struggling in my



breast, I returned to the sale-room, and leaving my comrade for a short time to manage affairs himself, retired to a corner of the room, where, having pondered a while on this fresh disappointment, I started to myself, resolved to think no more of the matter. During the rest of the time we staid here, nothing interesting happened. As soon as the Fair was finished, we made up our budgets, and taking separate courses, agreed to meet at night in Musselburgh, which lies on the shore, about three miles distant.

In this day's excursion I met with little worthy remarking, and found but indifferent sale for my goods. Though in the bosom of a rich and luxuriant country, yet the houses were but thinly scattered, and those few I met with, were either miserable hovels, or lordly farms; their possessors deprest with hard labour and poverty, or rendered haughty by pride, luxury, and absolute power over their vassals. The farms here being portioned out in large tracts, the poor peasant must be the farmer's slave, or remove to the town; and I have often observed among them a spiritless resignation to their drudgeries and mean servitude. Almost unconscious that they were born for any other thing, but to be perpetual servants, from father to son and from mother to daughter, they struggle with want, and rear up their offspring in the service of their insolent superiors.

I am very far from affirming that these poor people are less happy than their opulent masters, whose houses exhibit a continual scene of extravagant feasting and other luxuries, copied from the laudable fashions of the great, those patterns of prudence and leaders of mankind. I am persuaded, that the humble, parsimonious peasant, eats his simple meal with as much satisfaction, rises refreshed from his few hours of sleep with as much cheerfulness, and experiences more real happiness, peace of mind, and bodily health, than those overgorged superiors, who treat their dependents as slaves, and look down on them as beings made of an inferior mould. Yet I cannot forbear regretting, that the pernicious and increasing custom of extensive farms, is not abolished, and a lesser portion of land allotted to each; by which means, the extremities of want and luxury would be equally avoided, the poor put on a footing to do something for themselves

and offspring, and the country, more honestly supplied with its own product, than it is at this present day.

About the dusk of the evening I entered Musselburgh, and proceeding to the appointed rendezvous, found my comrade newly arrived, whose success, by the smiles that sat on his face, I understood to have been equal to his wishes. Having ate nothing since the morning (for the country people are becoming too fashionable, to affront a pedlar by offering him victuals), we ordered our landlady to make ready some eatables, and sat down to dinner with an appetite that gave double relish to our small but refreshing repast.

I had, when in this town, about nine months before, obtained subscriptions from several people of the place, and as our stay was intended to be short, I took a few copies along with me, and set out in search of some of those gentlemen, whose promises I had been persuaded positively to depend on. The first I found out, was a little, hunch-backed dominie, who had formerly professed a singular esteem for me, and had not only subscribed himself, but also, cheerfully engaged to procure me a numerous list among his friends. That the reader may have a better idea of this important teacher, I shall beg leave to represent him here, to his eye, as he exactly appeared to mine. His height was something less than that of an ordinary walking staff. His head (which far exceeded the proportion of his bulk, and seemed to be, "Of more than mortal size") was fixed between two huge eminencies, the one jutting out before and the other heaped up behind like a mountain. His eyes were large, and rolled for ever with a kind of jealous pride and self-importance, on all around him. The rest of his figure was spun out into a pair of legs and thighs, that, extended outwards on each side, supported his shapeless frame, like the long feet of a clerk's writing-stool. This strange phenomenon, gazing up to my face for a considerable time, declared he had never seen me in his life-time before.

I mentioned some circumstances in our last conversation, namely, the proposed publication and subscription paper, with some other particulars; and with difficulty brought the affair to his remembrance, which, he said, "Was like a dream to him."

Having surveyed the book for some time, he enquired the price, and being told it, returned the copy immediately, saying, he would take none of it at that price. I replied, that the price was no more than what was signified in the Proposals. This he flatly denied; on which, pulling out a copy of the conditions, "I'll take it on no conditions," said the impertinent dwarf. "What!" replied I, "did you not subscribe for the book!" "It might be so," said he, "but show me my name! No law can oblige me to take it unless you can show me my hand-write." I told him, that I trusted as much to people's honour as their formal subscription, and reminded him of putting the paper to which he had subscribed in his pocket, with a kind promise of doing something for the author. It was in vain that I endeavoured to expostulate the matter with him; his wife joined him, exclaiming, that they knew better how their money came, than to throw it away on nonsense; and the deformed creature itself, continually squeaked out, "Shew me my name! shew me my name! No law can oblige me, sir, unless you shew me my individual hand-write." Although I was secretly exasperated at this diminutive wretch, yet I concealed my indignation, and telling him, that Nature had indeed been very unkind to him, in giving him a crazy body with such an insignificant soul, left the house immediately. I proceeded next to another, of the same tribe, who had promised to take a copy, with this proviso, that I should sacrifice one-half of its price with him at the shrine of Bacchus. I found him at home, and was civilly received. He looked over the book some time, but told me with an honest frankness, I had taken him in a wrong time, and hoped that I would not interpret his inability to a want of willingness to take the poems. Poverty, he said, had frozen up his pockets, and effectually prevented him from performing his engagement, but if at any future period I had occasion to pass that way, he begged that I would not neglect to call. I promised to do so, and again proceeded to another quarter of the town. To relate all the different receptions, and describe the various characters I met with in this place, would be tedious, and perhaps uninteresting. By some I was treated with the most extreme kindness; others had entirely forgot the affair, and the greatest part, either could or

would not, accept of it. Tired of this fruitless expedition and sick of their mean excuses, I returned to my lodgings, and concealing the nature of my success from my comrade, joined in the mirth that seemed to circle round the hearth.

My companion had been sitting alone by the kitchen fire, over a solitary bottle, when a little, old, decent-dressed man entered, who was soon followed by his spouse, and both were invited to a share of his bottle. This, after some few apologies, was accepted, and they diffidently sat down. In a simple, open manner the old man told him, that he was a weaver in the town; that it was not his usual custom to frequent public-houses, but at very rare times. "This woman and I," continued he, "have lived man and wife, upwards of forty years together, and it has been our custom, on the Tuesday's night after our Occasion, to be hearty over a pint; and, indeed, sir, when folks come to our time of life, they are much the better of a little; and a simple bottle at a time, you know, can do nobody harm." My comrade readily agreed with his sentiments, and in the midst of much chit-chat, the cann was cheerfully circling when I entered and joined the company. As the liquor began to ascend to our friend's upper flat, he forgot the reserve and diffidence that at first so much embarrassed him, and jocosely entertained us with the transactions of his youth. These anecdotes, silly and unimportant as they were, were yet related with such an ignorant simplicity, and bespoke such undebauched innocence of manners, (a quality too rarely to be met with in an old man) that I listened, or rather gazed on the harmless creature, with uncommon delight. "Gentlemen," said he, "you are acquaint with the world, what news do you hear about this time? Think ye, will we have any fighting or no?"—"The last expresses bring bad news," replied my companion, "the Dutch have landed a large army on Holland, and taken possession of it." "Say you so! (said he with great concern) that is bad news indeed. That puts a stop to all! If the Dutch have really taken Holland, I doubt we're all over, for Holland had sworn to be on our side." Such was this reverend sire's knowledge of the world, and I believe it were much to the temporal and spiritual peace and interest of some modern politicians, that they knew no more. My comrade

now entreated that he would favour us with a song. "As for songs," said he, "I can sing none; but if any here would assist me, we'll try to have a Psalm tune; it is the far sweetest of all music." To this we all immediately agreed, and our groggy old dad giving out the words, "O mother dear Jerusalem," raised the Martyrs, but in such a style, with such a profusion of graces, and melancholy of tone, solemnity of look, and distortion of features, as made the whole company burst out into an universal roar of laughter, his spouse alone excepted, who, while the tune went on, seemed wrapt up in all the enthusiasm of devotion.

Having amused ourselves to a late hour with this simple, honest couple, and sent them staggering home in the greatest good humour, we retired to our room, there to forget the toils of the day in sleep. Next morning, as soon as breakfast was over, I prepared to traverse the town, and marking out with my eye a few of the most genteel houses, proceeded to business. On the east end of this town, in a retired and most agreeable situation, stands the celebrated Pinky-house, the seat of the Honourable Sir Archibald Hope. As his lady desired me to send her a copy, as soon as published, I set out without delay for the house, where I was kindly received, and generously encouraged. This was adding fire to my fancy, and vigour to my resolution; I returned her ladyship my sincere acknowledgments, and, though in the course of my future applications that day, I met with a greater number of insolent rebuffs than usual, yet, the consideration of the success I had been honoured with in the morning, made me overlook them all. When we are once conscious of enjoying the kind wishes and approbation of the wise and good, the neglect of fools and the scandal of the world, make but a slight impression on the mind. Persuaded of their applause, we rise above the malice of envy, and support the pressure of misfortunes with an undaunted fortitude and magnanimity of soul. This I call true fame, at once the inspiration and ample reward of every noble action. All else, is but empty contemptible babbling; the breath of fools, the noisy shoutings of an undiscerning mob, and the certain destroyer of that invaluable blessing, peace of mind. At evening as I was about to return home, remembering of having lent an innkeeper



of the town a volume of my poems the preceding night, that he might have some idea of the merits of the book before purchasing it, I immediately paid him a visit, and asked how he was pleased with the pieces. "By God," said he, "they're clever, d—ned clever, but I incline more to the historical way, such as Goldsmith's Scots History, the Inquest of Peru, and things of that kind, else I would cheerfully take a copy. The book is cheap," continued he, turning it round and round, "perfectly cheap. A gentleman from England, who stayed here all summer, and went away only about two weeks ago, had the biggest cargo of books that ever I laid my eyes on. Had you been but so lucky as to have come here then—by G—d he would have bought a whole trunk-full from you!" The experience I had of the world made me soon see through this silly evasion, and but little regret my want of acquaintance with this wonderful literary hero; yet I could not help smiling at his harangue, and enquiring when the gentleman would return, told him not to neglect writing to me as soon as he arrived, and putting the poems in my pocket, went directly home. And now, having done all the business we could in this place, and directed the bulk of our goods to Haddington, we called our landlady and discharged the bill, in order to be ready for setting out at an early hour next day. Before concluding my account of this town, I might here mention some gentlemen, whose generosity I experienced, and likewise present the reader with a sketch of some characters, whose insults, pride, and stupidity, I bore with; but as the former of these will, I hope, accept of this general acknowledgment, and as the latter are of a class too despicable for notice, I decline saying any more. Some of them, I am convinced, suffer at present the effects of their own folly, and by their wretched poetical attempts and translations, have exposed to the world their miserable taste and enormous ignorance.

The morning was spreading gray in the east, the air mild and still, and the sun a little above the horizon, when, laden with our respective budgets, my companion and I departed from Musselburgh, and with our face to the east, plodded along the shore. Here we had leisure to survey and opportunity to contemplate the vast prospect that surrounded us. The Frith of Forth, which

divides east Lothian from Fifeshire, is, here, about ten miles over ; and we could plainly discover the long train of towns that stretch along the opposite coast. The sea was smooth as glass, and interspersed with a considerable number of large vessels, moving lazily along on the tide, while their white canvass glittered in the sun. The sea-fowl clamoured from every quarter, and a vast number of fishing-boats from different places, were scattered about a mile from the shore, intent at their occupation. Behind us, Arthur's Seat rose towering to the heavens. To the west and north, was seen the mountains of Fife, and to the east the most conspicuous were North-Berwick-Law and the Bass, rising a little above the mainland. The melody of birds on the one hand, the solemn sounding of the sea along the pebbly shore on the other, joined to the wide watery prospect that spread before us, formed a most enchanting entertainment, that at once delighted the eye, charmed the ear, and conveyed a tide of rapture to the whole soul. We proceeded forward in this manner for about a mile, when turning to the right hand we ascended a steep hill and directed our steps to every hut and human abode that came within ken. The land here is high, commanding a still more extensive view of the Frith, and the rich fertile country around ; adorned at little distances with some not inelegant country seats, surrounded with clusters of pine plantings and huge army oaks, and green pleasure-grounds which serve as pasturage to some fine flocks of sheep, cows, and oxen. As the day began to decline in the west, we descended to Prestonpans, a black uncomfortable town on the shore ; and about three miles distant from Musselburgh. Here I made a few efforts to recommend myself and wares to some of the principal inhabitants, but without success ; and seeing neither the appearance of sale, nor the prospect of finding common accommodation for the night, we left its smoky confines, that seemed to be overlaid with eternal showers of soot, and travelling for about two miles to the south, through those fields once stained with the blood and strewed with the carcasses of our contesting countrymen, we reached Tranent, where, after an hour's fruitless search for lodgings, we were at last directed to the house of an honest Northumbrian, who kept a little genteel public-house, and were treated with a



generous and cheerful hospitality. The table was spread with excellent provision, the beer went freely round, and an old travelling fiddler who sat by the fire, in recompence for the few draughts he had drunk, tuned his instrument, and entertained us with a mixture of murdered sounds and squeaking discords.

There is no species of pleasure more generally pleasing, or made more welcome to the human heart, than flattery. Flattery is the food of vanity, and vanity is the daughter of ignorance. To know ourselves, is the only method to exclude vanity and the certain way to despise flattery. Yet such is the frailty of our nature, that the minds of the wisest, as well as those of the most foolish, are apt at certain times, to be swelled by a secret pride and conscious belief of a worth and importance, beyond what they really possess. These ideas privately indulged, are not without their doubts; but when persons are once applauded to the skies for those rare qualities, and celebrated for the express excellencies which they long supposed themselves possessed of, their doubts instantly disappear, their pride rises confirmed of its master's mighty importance, and the flatterer is hugged as their noblest friend,—one who has at length ventured to tell the truth; whose candour and penetration can justly discern and honestly display the brilliancy of their merits. With a full doze of this inspiring potion we treated our inimitable musician, and by extolling the loudness of his fiddle, the agility with which he played, the almost innumerable multitudes of his tunes, and in short, every other quality that belonged to a good performer, we kept him scratching among the strings, till a profusion of sweat streamed from every quarter of his countenance, and the tolling of the town bell summoned us to bed. Next morning we rose to take a view of the town, and seeing it to be but trifling, composed for the most part of mean houses, occupied by labourers and some weavers (who in this part of the country are wretchedly poor), we resumed our budgets, and proceeded eastward to Haddington, keeping the highway, sometimes on this hand, sometimes on that, according as the situation of the farm-houses lay. As we were thus tacking from place to place, a white house, that crowned the top of a neighbouring hill about half a mile from the road, caught my eye, and as its outward appearance

seemed to indicate better within, I steered directly for the glittering mansion. On my arrival, without stopping to knock (a ceremony never practised by pedlars, except when absolute necessity requires), I entered a spacious kitchen, where a large fire flamed in the chimney, over which an enormous pot raged with the heat, while a couple of cats basked on the hearth. All around wore the appearance of sumptuous plenty, but human creature I neither saw nor heard. Tired with clambering up the steep, I threw down my budget on the top of an old trunk, and sat down expecting that some of the family would soon appear. I had not been long seated, when an overgrown mastiff entered from another door, and, eyeing me with a look of fury, passed and repassed several times, then stretching himself on the floor, fixed his red eye-balls with a grim, sulky jealousy, broad in my face. I had rested for upwards of a quarter of an hour without any person making their appearance. Having little time to lose, I determined to stay no longer, and rose, with an intention of lifting my load. At this moment, the furious animal sprung forwards, and with a most infernal growl, seized me by the breast, and drove me against the partition!—Stunned as I was at this unexpected salute, I endeavoured by soft and soothing phrases, to get from his ungracious embrace, but I soothed in vain; he was proof against all the arts of flattery, which seemed rather to inflame his rage than soften him to peace. Meantime I burned with fury to be disengaged, and, had a large knife, which lay on the board, been within reach, I had most certainly plunged it into his entrails, and freed myself from this ferocious animal; but I was pinned to the wall, and to move was death. In this situation, I stood for some time, when an old lady entered, and seeing two such figures, in such a position, started back, and stood for a few moments, fixed in astonishment. I briefly explained the circumstances to her, and desired her to call down the dog; this she instantly did, and delivered me from one of the most disagreeable companions I ever had in my life. Meantime, the servants entering, she severely reprimanded them for leaving the kitchen; and relating the affair, a general laugh commenced, in which, being now out of danger, I heartily joined, resolved for the future to take care,

when and where, I parted with my budget. Whether this humorous accident had opened their hearts, or that they really stood in need of these articles, I know not, but an uncommon spirit for purchasing seemed to prevail ; my wares were tossed out on a large table, a group soon assembled, and for upwards of two hours, I was closely engaged cutting, measuring, and pocketing the cash ; while the old matron, herself, hearing I was an author, liberally purchased a copy of my poems. After which the servants began, with no less spirit ; so that, betwixt the success of my sale and the enjoyment of a plentiful dinner, I had almost forgot the horror of the mastiff's growls, when I gratefully left the house, gained the highway, and in a short time joined my companion.





II.—Letters and American Letter-  
Journals in America.

#### N O T E .

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For the sources of this greatly-enlarged collection of the Letters and American Letter-Journals of Wilson,—a considerable number of the former being here first printed or first brought together,—see the Preface. The whole are arranged chronologically. The main things of each Letter are placed at the head successively. A star [\*] denotes those first printed here : a dagger [†] those hitherto unedited : those unmarked, have been previously collected.—*G.*



## Letters.

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### \* LETTER I.

'A poor inconsiderate mortal'—varied scenes and parts—unsoothed grief—a glimpse of the setting sun to the traveller—'sailor's' last look—the past 'harmony and love,' except visits of 'a certain tattered dame'—a 'packman'—Kennedy, Picken, and author of song of 'Bannockburn'—good wishes—Verse.

To Mr. DAVID BRODIE, *Schoolmaster,*  
*Quarrelton, near Paisley.*

April 23, 1788.

DEAR FRIEND,

A poor inconsiderate mortal once known to you, but alas ! long since lost from you amidst the hurry and bustle of life, here takes the liberty of enquiring after your welfare. Many a scene has he passed through, and many a part has he acted ; yet in all his lonely hours, you presented yourself to his ken. And did that soothe his grief or heighten his pleasure ? No ; alas, no more than the last brief glimpse of the setting sun gives to the traveller when he is himself just about to be benighted in some lonely desert, and hears already the dismal howls and growls of ferocious animals surrounding him ; or as the weeping



sailor, when he takes his last long look of his native shore which contains all he holds dear. With what anguish do I reflect on past scenes, where all was harmony and love, except for a few visits that your humble servant had the dishonour of receiving from a certain tattered dame, whom, however, he did not much regard, but often laughed her out of countenance. Oh! happy, happy seasons, ne'er shall ye return! and where and what have you left me? Why, nothing but a Poor Packman! Nay, stare not, my friend; nothing more or less, I assure you, is the personage that thus makes bold to address you. Here I should pause and stop, and let you ponder and wonder and laugh; but I will not, for I have more to tell you. Know then, that last week I passed almost a whole night in company with three poets. One was James Kennedy, Ebenezer Picken—who is publishing his works, and the last and most glorious was the immortal author of that well-known ballad, "The Battle of Bannockburn," "From the Ocean, &c." Blessed meeting! Never did I spend such a night all my life. Oh, I was all fire! oh, I was all spirit! I had the honour of being highly complimented by 'Bannockburn' for a poem which I wrote in praise of his sublime song. Perhaps I may have the pleasure of sending a copy of it, if you please to answer my letter, with several other pieces which I have beside me. I have sent you here a few verses on a trifling circumstance, but the thoughts resemble a spider—she spins a very extensive work from a small compass. Dear Sir, if you will favour me with a letter on receiving this, I shall regard it [as] one of the greatest honours you ever did me. I have now a more deep regard for the Muse than ever. I have opportunity, and my views are more expanded than when I sung on the loom. Mr. Kennedy desires to be remembered to you. I would write more to you, but perhaps I disturb you. If I have said anything amiss, pardon me. I know there are a great many wrong-spelt words, which you will please look over. That you may long be happy in your noisy mansion to hammer wisdom through the dark walls of the blockheads' skulls; to teach the young ideas how to shoot; to pour instruction over the opening

mind ; to be a terror to evil-doers, and a praise to well-doers, is the sincere wish of

SIR,

Your humble Servant,

ALEXANDER WILSON.

P.S.—Please direct to the care of Alex. Leishman, West End of Falkirk, where I will be for three weeks to come.

EDINBURGH, April 28, 1788.

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Dear Friend and patron of my Muse's song,  
 All she attempts does unto you belong ;  
 Vouchsafe the thanks she thus most grateful pays.  
 Inspired by you she shot her infant rays,  
 Dawn'd to the light, and glory'd in your praise ;  
 But cursed Fortune that still frowning slut,  
 Rent us asunder from our peaceful hut.  
 O happy dwelling ! where my willing pen  
 Drew scenes of horror, or deceits of men,—  
 In your kind face I saw encore or hiss,  
 Each smile was rapture, and each laugh was bliss.

P.S.—If you should wonder at this short address,  
 Read the first letters of these lines, and guess.

[*An acrostic*—D-A-V-I-D B-R-O-D-I-E.]

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\* LETTER II.

Apology in mock-heroics for not sending a Book—Thomas Wotherspoon—peruse the MS. with the 'eye of a friend and a critic'—Verses.

*To the Same.*

August 13, 1788.

RESPECTED SIR,

I am very much ashamed to think I have used you so mean and dishonourably, after promising to leave the book ; but

O place it not to blank regard,  
 Or disrespect insist ;  
 Ye ken yoursel' my hapless weird,—  
 The frail, the faithless chest !!

I have at length sent it to be conveyed to you from Paisley by Thomas Wotherspoon. Mr. James Kennedy has his compliments to you. As for the little book, if you take the trouble to peruse it, let it be with the joint eye of a friend and critic. I shall take it very kindly to hear your objections. I could have sent you another, but let this suffice for the present—as perhaps you have little time to spare.

Now, though I did my promise break,  
 An' gart you on my truth reflect ;  
 Believe me, sir, with true respect,  
 Though undeservin',  
 While I can lift a pen or snek,  
 You humble servin'.

ALEXANDER WILSON.

EDINBURGH, August 13, 1788.

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\* LETTER III.

Out as a 'Packman' (Pedlar)—In an Inn at St. Andrews—The year departing—  
 Silence and solitude—'Holy' inferences and admonitions kept back—  
 Despondency—Self-Blame—Remembrance—Farewell—A Visit announced—  
 Verse and Prose.

*To the Same.*

Written on the last day, and last hour of that last day,  
 December 31, 1788.

Far distant, in an inn's third storey rear'd, —  
 The sheet beneath a glimmering taper spread, —  
 Along the shadowy walls no sound is heard,  
 Save Time's slow, constant, momentary tread.

Here lone I sit ; and will you, sir, excuse  
 My midnight theme, while (feebly as she can)  
 Inspiring silence bids the serious Muse  
 Survey the transient bliss pursued by Man.

Deluded Man, for him Spring paints the fields ;  
 For him, warm Summer rears the rip'ning grain ;  
 He grasps the bounty that rich Autumn yields,  
 And counts those trifles as essential gain.

For him, yes, sure, for him those mercies flow !  
 Yet, why so passing, why so fleet their stay ?  
 To teach blind mortals what they first should know,  
 That all is transient as the fleeting day.

Short is the period since green smil'd the wood,  
 And flowers ambrosial bath'd my morning path ;  
 Sweet was the murmuring of the silver flood,  
 And glad the bee roam'd o'er the empurpled heath !

With conscious joy, I hail'd the rosy scene ;  
 I joined the music of the woodlan' throng,  
 Stretch'd on the hazel bank, or sunny plain,  
 Where answering echo warbl'd all day long.

Delightful time ! but, ah, how short its stay !  
 Stript were the foliage from each flower, each tree,—  
 Grim tyrant Winter vail'd the joyless day,  
 And rear'd imperious o'er the hail-beat lea.

Where now the fragrance of the howling wood,  
 And what the pleasures we from morn can taste ;  
 The snow-clad banks, the big brown roaring flood,  
 The bleak wind whistling o'er the drifted waste.

'Tis thus, dear sir, in Life's delusive dream ;—  
 We fondly sport till Youth's gay act is o'er,  
 Till Age, till Death, steal on in sullen stream,  
 And worldly bubbles charm the soul no more.

Passing by a whole cart-load of holy inferences which I had drawn from these considerations, also overleaping the long train of admonitions resulting from these inferences, let me tell you that nothing but the hopes I have that you entertain most magnificent ideas of my poems, (part of which I guess by your expressive silence,) would have induced me to have racked my brain at such a rate, and sitten in such an uncomfortable situation, to give you a rhyme narration,—a hint of which uncomfortable seat you have

in the following verses, which I am obliged to give you just as they are broken off from the cluster of a long prayer which I had inserted, but which, on account of its enormous weight and vast extent, I omit and expunge :—

But, sir, forgive the wandering of the Muse.  
To you, again, her sadd'ning strain she'll turn ;  
To you, to ask (and oh ! remit the news)  
Why thus, with silence, all my warmth return ?

It is because—but, hark !—the tempest blows  
Loud. O'er my fireless dome it wildly heaves !  
The wintry drop, prone from my drooping nose,  
Hangs dangling, limpid as the brain it leaves.

The frowning Muse has fled the frozen frame,—  
The voice of Riot strikes my list'ning ear,—  
In sinking, mounting—sad, inconstant flame—  
My candle's ending with the ending year.

Here you may perhaps stare up, and exclaim—“Why, what does the fellow mean ? If he sat pining in that deplorable case, was it not his own fault ? Was there no liquor in the house ?” Aye ; but my friend you don't consider that drinking is destructive to reason, and reason, in her purest state, is requisite when I write to you. And, moreover, drinking is the bane of frugality, and frugality is one of the essentials of a pedlar, and I am a pedlar ; so you see no wonder I suffered patiently, when I suffered rightly. But to conclude—

Dear sir, adieu ! may success, health, and peace,  
Crown your each year, and every labour too ;  
And, sure, if virtuous worth claims human praise,  
Fate yet in keeping holds a wreath for you.

Fraught with fresh blessings be this coming year ;  
And should some period of its fav'ring reign  
Admit the pedlar's joy, he'll homeward steer,  
And hail your mansion and his friend again.

I am,

RESPECTED SIR,

Yours,

ALEXANDER WILSON.

ST. ANDREWS, Dec. 31, 1788.

## \* LETTER IV.

Confidence from past approbation—Manuscripts sent for perusal and 'severe' criticism—Spelling and handwriting 'if it be legible' to be excused—Genius 'often appears in rags'—more 'Pieces' ready—A Volume contemplated—disappointed of a letter—The school and pre-occupation no excuse for forgetting 'the Pedlar'—A poetical fable—The future uncertain—Papers destroyed.

*To the Same.*

April 8, 1789.

DEAR SIR,

Presuming on the approbation you have been pleased often to honour my small performances with, I have here sent for your perusal a collection of the most noticeable that I have at present by me, requesting it as a most singular favour, that you would examine them with the severity of a discerning critic—without mercy ; or rather, in mercy, exposing what you deem improper or unharmonious,—as no doubt, in spite of my studied particular care, numbers of such have escaped me. Wrong spelling, or a word or two neglected, I hope you will rectify. Such oversights are not strangers to the most careful. As to the penmanship in which they appear, say nothing about it. If you can read it, that's all I want ; if not, I will join with you in calling it truly wretched. What of that ? Genius often appears in rags, beauty in a hut ; and why may not you disregard the garb when the author has alas ! no better to give them ? but I know you will.

I believe I may have as many pieces as finish the book, with some themes only in view yet ; and should you approve of it, I would soon curse the world with another poetical volume ; but Vanity, hence !

I have this some time fondly expected a letter from you ; but have been disappointed. Involved amid the ceaseless murmur of a school, and your mind employed in hearing petitions, distributing learning and justice, stilling external commotions, and spreading a venerable awe over your tumultuous subjects, is a task superior to thousands, and adequate to great parts. No wonder, then, amid your political operations, you forget the

Pedlar (removed to a distant country),—despicable as the vanities he deals in. However, don't imagine I reflect on you. You know me too well for to think that ; and I hope you will excuse the freedom I have taken, imputing it to that principle of *impudence* that every packman is essentially vested with. If after perusing the miscellany, they merit your praise, how will I exult ! but as I am prepared for the worst, I shall be bold enough to read my fate in the following fable, which, as I have a little leisure at present, I relate for the sake of the striking likeness of the principle character to it of a certain pedantic genius well known to you :—

A Monkey who, in leisure hours,  
Was wondrous fond of herbs and flowers  
(For once he wore a gardener's chain,  
But 'scaped safe to his woods again),  
Chose out a spot to show his parts.  
Scratches the soil,—the flower inserts ;  
    There stuck the rose,  
    There placed the pink,  
With various blooms filled every chink.

Around him stole the mimic crew,  
Amused at the appearance new ;  
    The shrubs surveyed,  
    The nodding flowers ;  
And, struck with wonder at his powers,  
Pronounced him, with applauding gape,  
A most expert, ingenious ape,—  
“ Knew humans what you thus inherit,  
Unbounded gifts would crown your merit.”  
    He proudly bowed,  
    Approved their taste,  
And for the town prepares in haste.

A bee who flew from bloom to bloom  
In vain, for food, thus fixed his doom ;—  
“ What mighty fool ! what senseless ass !  
Has laid these gaudy nothings thus ?  
    Stalks placed in bloom,  
    Shrubs fixed for fruit,  
And each without a trunk or root.  
Fool that I was to ramble here,  
I merit just the whole hives' sneer ;  
For they who patronise a fool,  
Are meanest mankind's meanest tool.”



He spoke,—the burning noontide came,—  
They withering shrunk, and sunk his fame.

If such be my fate, “I’ll break my reed, and never whistle  
mair.”

I have sent you here a printed piece of a friend’s, with a motto  
on the title page from the pen of the illustrious Alex, which I had  
inexpressible rapture of seeing in the *News*!!

DEAR SIR,—I hope you will, in a short time, remit a few lines  
to me by Thomas Witherspoon, or by the direction you have,  
as I don’t “know what a day may bring forth,”—some un-  
avoidable misfortunes beginning to blacken over my head, and  
looking melancholy enough, yet for all that, it glads me to be  
your humble servant,

ALEXANDER WILSON.

EDINBURGH, April 8, 1789.

P.S.—I have no other copy of the Essays save the one I sent  
you, having committed them to the flames. Some of the pieces  
are not finished for want of time, not for a want of materials.

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LETTER V.

Despondency—Poets of ‘fine feelings’—Encouragement given—perhaps better to  
remain a ‘Weaver’ only—nevertheless, the Muse a comforter—A ‘Packman’  
not respected—Poems need correction—‘Lochwinnoch’ and M’Dowall.

*To the Same.*

EDINBURGH, Nov. 10th, 1789.

DEAR SIR,

Among the many and dismal ingredients that embitter the  
cup of life, none affect the feelings or distress the spirit, as deeply  
as despondence. She is the daughter of disappointed hope, and the  
mother of gloomy despair, the source of every misery, and the  
channel to eternal ruin. Happy, thrice happy the man, whose

breast is fortified against her insinuations, and towers above her tyranny. But, alas! what heart has not sunk beneath her melancholy frowns! To be snatched from the yawning jaws of ruin, raised on the wings of hope to the delightful fields of bliss and felicity—to have the enchanting prospect before us, or within our grasp, and in these flattering circumstances to be cruelly insulted, and unmercifully precipitated down the unfathomable gulph, is what would bring a sigh from the most insensible and hardened wretch in the universe. How much more then must it agonize that individual who trembles at the least prospect of disorder or misfortune. In every age the poet has been allowed to be possessed of finer feelings, and quicker sensations than the bulk of mankind. To him joy is rapture, and sorrow despair; the least beam of hope brightens, and the slightest shades horrify his tumultuous soul? Imagination points out the approaching storm, and anticipates that wretchedness which it thinks is impossible to be avoided. If such their state, may Heaven guard me from the wretched tribe. But what do I say? I have been hurried on by the irresistible tide of inclination until now, and at this moment I find myself enrolled among those very wretches, and a sharer of these express torments at which I start. Oh, my friend! why did you awake that spark of genius, which has now overspread my soul? Your smile called it to existence, and your approbation inspired its gathering flame. How greedily did I devour the tempting bait. Every look of applause lifted me a stage, till I gained the highest pinnacle of Hope and Expectation; and how dreadful my fall! Happy would I have been, had I scorned the offered incense of praise, and been deaf, resolutely deaf, to the bewitching accents; then had I still been buried in the dark cobweb recesses of some solitary hut, launching the murmuring shuttle, or guiding the slender thread; all my care a trifle to satisfy my landlady, and all my joy John's\* grim-like smile; and my highest hope, a good web. Transporting thought, 'delightful period.' These were the times of joy and plenty, the reign of uninterrupted content. Were they? Ha! where is my mistaken

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\* A well-known manufacturer in Paisley.

fancy running? "The reign of content, the times of plenty." Conscience denies the lying assertion, and experience shakes her expressive head. She says no such times were they. Toil was thy abhorrence. Want hovered over thy loom, and poverty stalked with thee as thy shadow. True, my faithful guide,—true is your accusation. I own I grovelled in obscurity, no hopes to inspire, nor muse to soothe my struggling breast, till you, my dear friend, saw the glimmering spark, blew it to a flame, and rescued the buried muse from oblivion. How often has she soothed my troubled mind, and enabled me to breathe forth my melancholy plaints, dissolved me to joy, or swelled me to rapture; and shall I blame you for this? No, my dear sir, your name inspires her theme, and her best services shall be at your feet.

Since I left Paisley, I have met with some encouragement, but I assure you, sir, that my occupation is greatly against my success in collecting subscribers. A *Packman* is a character which none esteem, and almost every one despises. The idea which people of all ranks entertain of them is, that they are mean-spirited, loquacious liars, cunning and illiterate, watching every opportunity, and using every low and mean art within their power to cheat. When any one applies to a genteel person, pretending to be a poet, he is treated with ridicule and contempt; and even though he should produce a specimen, it is either thrown back again, without being thought worthy of perusal, or else read with prejudice. I find also that a poet's fame is his wealth. Of this the booksellers to whom I applied with proposals have complained, saying "it was a pity I was not better known." I think therefore it will be my best scheme to collect the manuscripts in an orderly manner, and send them to some gentleman for correction. Since I saw you, I have finished several pieces in English verse, particularly a poem entitled "Lochwinnoch," in which I hope I have drawn the character of Mr. M'D. so as to please you, and perhaps himself, yet after all you cannot conceive the difficulties which at present involve,

DEAR SIR,

Your humble Servant,

ALEXANDER WILSON.

## LETTER VI.

In adversity and dejection—Health failing—Future dark and sad—Death a terror.

\**To Mr. THOMAS CRICHTON.*

September 20th, 1790 :

Tower of Athenbathy.

DEAR FRIEND,

It undoubtedly requires a greater degree of fortitude, and a firmer constitution for a feeling mind to struggle with adversity, than is often their lot. Under the pressure of virtuous misfortunes, thousands pine in secret till disease settles on their frame, and consumes the little of life they have left, while others are unhappy only in the eyes of the world. Blessed with hearts unsusceptible of feeling the past, or fearing the future, they only endure the present sufferings, which hope dissipates with endearing smiles and ceaseless promises. A sensibility under misfortune gives every new distress innumerable stings, but when once hope takes her residence in the heart, their numbers diminish, their terrors disappear, and, though under real suffering for the present, we forget them in the anticipation of future scenes of approaching happiness.

Such, my dear sir, are the thoughts that for ever revolve through my breast—such the melancholy reflections of one lost to every beam of hope,—and such, amid the most dismal, the most complicated horrors of distress ! Driven by poverty and disease to the solitudes of retirement, at the same period when the flush of youth, the thirst of fame, the expected applause of the world, and the charms of ambition, welcomed him to the field. Had I but one hope more left of enjoying life and health, methinks I could cheerfully suffer the miseries that now surround me; but, alas, I feel my body decay daily, my spirits and strength continually decrease, and something within tells me that dissolution,—dreadful dissolution,—is not far distant. No heart can conceive the terrors

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\*This letter is written on a leaf torn from a ruled account book.—G.

of those who tremble under the apprehension of death. This increases their love of life, and every new advance of the king of terrors overwhelms them with despair. How hard, how difficult, how happy to prepare for eternity; and yet how dreadful to live or to die unprepared. Oh! that I were enabled to make it my study to interest myself in his favour, who has the keys of Hell and of Death. Then all the vanities of life would appear what they really are, and the shades of death would brighten up a glorious path to everlasting mansions of felicity.

My dear sir, you will no doubt be surprised to hear me talk in this manner, but are not you more surprised that you found me so long a stranger to these things? They are the sincere effusions of my soul, and I hope that through the Divine aid they shall be my future delight, whether health shall again return, or Death has lifted the commissioned dart.

My health is in a very declining state. The surgeon believes my disease to be an inflammation of the lungs. I intend to stay some time longer in the country, and to hear from you would be acceptable to the unfortunate

ALEXANDER WILSON.

P.S.—Excuse this shift for want of paper, and direct to me, care of William Ewing, innkeeper, Lochwinnoch, who will get your letter conveyed to me, or write by the bearer, who returns to-morrow.

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ANSWER OF MR. THOMAS CRICHTON.

PAISLEY, September, 1790.

DEAR SIR,

I received your letter, and am sorry to observe it spread over with such a melancholy gloom. Every sentence bespeaks a mind pierced through with many sorrows. Of all with whom I have been acquainted, I have never met with one more susceptible of painful feeling under the calamities of life than you are. I must acknowledge that your present situation is truly pitiable, and I can assure you that you have my sympathetic condolence. Poverty and disease, and all the painful sentiments that must arise in a mind so feeling as yours, present me with the most complicated scene of human woe. How different your situation now, from what it lately was, when in health and high-raised hopes, you anticipated the plaudits of fame on the ushering of your late publication into the world! How high your expectations, and how have they been disappointed! But what though you had been advanced to the highest pinnacle of the temple of Fame, would the

distinguished elevation have made you happy? The experience of thousands answer, No: Reason and Religion join with united voice in telling us, that

“Too low they build, who build beneath the skies.”

I shuddered when I read the description you gave me of your present state—that you are “lost to every beam of hope, and sunk amid the most dismal, the most complicated horrors of distress.” Sorry indeed would I be to increase the tide of misery that now overwhelms you, by any further reflections on this disagreeable subject. I would rather act the part of a kind physician, in pointing out the only medicine that can heal your wounded mind. To know that you are diseased, is to me a favourable symptom of your approaching cure. You seem to be sensible that in the days of bodily health and vigour, you neglected the most important concerns of eternity; and I am happy to observe that, when the clouds of adversity are darkly hovering over your head, you are convinced that an interest in the favour of HIM who hath the keys of hell and of death, is the one thing needful, and that you are not left to seek consolation in your present affliction from the gloomy principles of infidelity, as many have done in your circumstances. My dear friend, what a miserable creature is man, when destitute of religion! If I rightly recollect, in the last conversation I had with you, I compared him to a vessel without a rudder tossed to and fro upon the stormy ocean. —

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#### LETTER VII.

Miseries on the increase—As a traveller in a wood, ‘turned aside’ from the ‘beaten road’—Poverty and debts—Fame—Poetry a disappointment and snare—Hope shall not entice—The Volume of 1790—Kindness of his Publisher, ‘Neilson’—Resident in Edinburgh—A Journey with Mr. ——— no success.

*To the Same.*

HADDINGTON, 2nd November, 1790.

DEAR FRIEND,

I have no doubt but by this time you are anxious to hear what has become of me; and as I am at present disengaged, and have experienced much of your sympathy, I shall not think my time altogether lost to inform you of my situation—not that I can cheerfully assure you that all my miseries are sunk in oblivion, and all my sorrows vanished like a vision. No, alas! that happy period, that long-looked-for time has not yet arrived, but my miseries seem lengthening with life. I look upon myself as a traveller who, fond of variety, has left the beaten track to explore the recesses of some wood, whose tempting borders had drawn him from his way. Eager to contemplate the surrounding scenes, and captivated by the gaudy flowers that everywhere bend beneath his feet, he wanders on, forgetful of his journey, hunts through every new thicket, rushes through the thickening shade, till at



length he finds himself involved amid a labyrinth of perplexing branches, and harassing brambles. Forward, ten thousand distresses present themselves, and backward, he is unable to trace the path. Night approaches, the tempest roars among the trees, and the relentless savages of the forest howl around the distressed wretch, who now too late sees his folly, and reflects with a tear on those happy times when he cheerfully pursued his journey.

In this poetical wood, I am at this moment lost. There, the brambles and briars of poverty harass, and there is heard the growl of creditors. O that I could roll back the tide of time, and place myself in the same circumstances I was a few years ago. Then all the charms of Fame, the insinuations of ambition, the applause, renown, and admiration of the world, would in vain display their united glories to tempt me to one line of verse. But you will perhaps say, Why do you not adopt this laudable design, and put it in immediate design? Alas! sir, I fear I cannot, and this alone makes me to tremble. From repeated experience, I can here solemnly declare, that I have found poetry, however pleasing and delightful for the present moment, to be productive of nameless miseries, and in reality the source of all my sorrows. It has consumed much of my fleeting time that might have been employed to unspeakably better purposes in actions and necessary designs, that would have secured me the esteem of my friends, and conveyed pleasure in the reflection. By diverting my mind from the essential interests of life, it has plunged me into the depths of poverty, there solitary to languish, pained by the bitter reflection of being my own destroyer. In a word, it has sunk me in sickness, in debt, in disappointment, and in all the gloom of despondence; has embittered the comforts of life, and veiled from my view all the hopes of religion. And shall I still attend its dictates? Shall I nourish this deluding, this murdering enchantress, in my bosom? No, Heaven forbid. The smiles, the promises of Hope, shall never again deceive me, since all these once-expected laurels of fame and honour, and the treasures of wealth, are as distant from my view as ever. Let me, therefore, learn to despise them all; for what are all their glories but shadows, bubbles, and poisonous potions that corrupt the heart, disorder the judgment, and con-



tinually blast, and for ever banish that inestimable and best of blessings, *peace of mind*.—But where am I going? I sat down to give you an account of my present situation, but have distressed you with a melancholy detail of my past misfortunes. Pardon the digression, my dear friend, and consider that it is to the friend alone, that the burthened heart ventures to pour forth its sorrows. You know the little success I received in Paisley made me to tremble to think in what manner I should reveal my unfortunate circumstances to Mr. N—. To leave the place without making any apology for the past, or explanation of the method I intended to follow for the future, would, I considered, justly expose me to his displeasure and suspicion, and also be highly ungrateful in return for all that kindness he had all along shown me. I therefore went and explained matters as they stood, with the deepest regret for being unable to give him any money arising from the few copies I had sold. His goodness I shall never forget. He freely excused me on account of the circumstances in which I had been placed; but recommended it to me to be industrious in getting the rest disposed of, and that from whatever place I sent for copies, he would remit them. This was kind, exceeding kind, but alas! where was I to dispose of them? However, necessity urging, I gave my landlord one guinea, and an account, which I hope, by this time, has produced him another; and taking leave of all my friends, departed from the confines of that town where, in the short space of seven months, I had experienced all the combined horrors of sickness, poverty, and despondence. In two days I arrived at Edinburgh, and immediately paid Mr. — a visit. Unwilling to be looked upon as a burthensome guest, I hired a small room in the other end of the town, and five or six times a-day (by desire) attended this elevated gentleman's Levee. To give you a particular account of the distant and strange reception I met with from this quarter, would be unnecessary. After staying two weeks, Mr. — all on a sudden told me that he meant to take a jaunt through part of Scotland with goods, and invited me to assist him. To this I immediately consented, in expectation of selling my books. We have already been in Dalkeith, Musselburgh, Prestonpans, and are come to this place, and

although I have used every scheme I could invent, none seem to regard the author or to encourage his performance. How long I will continue in this state is uncertain. When at leisure write me, and you shall not fail in return to hear from the most unfortunate of poets, pedlars, and men, who, notwithstanding, is with the most sincere esteem,

Your affectionate Friend, while

ALEXANDER WILSON.

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\* LETTER VIII.

Present situation would evoke perchance 'mirth' and perchance 'sorrow'—Garrets, duns, etc.—poetical misery—Must renounce the Muse—toil or starve—Narrative enclosed (Journals).

To Mr. DAVID BRODIE.

January 5, 1791.

SIR,

Were you to see the situation in which I am while writing this letter, I can't for my life say whether mirth or sorrow would be most predominant in your mind ; whether a burst of uncommon laughter would convulse your nerves, or the tear of pity steal from your cheek. All the stories you have read of garrets, tatters, unmerciful duns, lank hunger, and poetical misery, are all sadly realised in me. The neglect of an unrewarding world has blasted all those airy hopes that once smiled so promisingly, and I find the decree of my fate running thus—Renounce poetry and all its distracting notions, descend to the labourer's vale of life, there attend the dictates of prudence, and *toil or starve*. The enclosed narrative I send you for your amusement, as a small return for the kindness you have often showed

Your humble Servant,

A. WILSON.

## \* LETTER IX.

Leisure moments for a Letter—left Paisley for Glasgow and thence to Falkirk—Picken 'received' me kindly, and 'presented' me to his wife, 'a decent enough woman'—Picken engaged at Carron—Proceeded to Callander, on the 'border of the Highlands'—Thoughts of remaining there—On the third day 'gave it up'—The Schoolmasters of Callander, sketches of them—In Edinburgh—'Last half-crown'—In the Pantheon.

*To the Same.*

23rd November, 1792.

DEAR SIR,

As a few leisure moments at present are at my disposal, I willingly devote them to your service; and as anything that relates to those we esteem never fails to interest, I hope, on receipt of this, you will oblige me in your turn. I left Paisley on Thursday's night, slept in Glasgow, and next morning travelled to Falkirk, where I was kindly received by Picken, who presented me to his wife,—a *decent enough woman*,—and prevailed on me to stay till Monday. I was agreeably informed that he had engaged to go to Carron (about a mile distant), there to enjoy a yearly salary of £50, for the trouble of teaching the English, French, and Latin Languages, Writing, and Arithmetic. For this purpose, they have built him a little genteel kitchen, with a parlour and two bedrooms, a closet, greatly enlarged the schoolhouse, and promised to do their utmost for him. I have not a doubt but Picken may please them; he has so much of the tongue, and such a quantity of the pedant in him, that what little abilities he possesses, will appear to the vulgar ten times greater than what they really are. It was fortunate this place started, as he told me he was in danger of starving in Falkirk. He was to remove Monday was eight days. From Falkirk, I went to Callander—a town on the border of the Highlands, about twenty-eight miles distant. I was half resolved to stay here, and study Arithmetic; and for this end, sent for the town-schoolmaster. (I should have informed you that there is a large Academy here under the

inspection of Mr. Robertson, the minister, and patronised by Drummond of Perth). Well, he came, and I told him my intention. "Very well," says he, "you can come whenever it is agreeable." I had a little money with me, and I foolishly believed it would serve me till I should make considerable proficiency in arithmetic. I accordingly went, purchased a slate, and set seriously about it. Two days elapsed,—I persevered; but the *third*, I gave it up. I began to consider the *costs*, which would soon have consumed my little all; so paid my lodgings, and decamped. I reached Stirling about 7 at night, and went forward to St. Ninians, where I lodged all night. I set out for Edinburgh next morning, where I arrived about twilight.

There are two teachers in the school at Callander,—one teaches Latin and French, the other English, Writing, and Arithmetic. As for the first, I am not a proper judge of his merits, further than that he seemed totally devoid of all sentiments of humanity in correcting. The latter surprised me very much, and must undoubtedly be a genius, as he teaches a language he has not yet learned to speak (being a Highlander), and writes about as well as your humble servant did in our Gordon-Ionian cell. Upon the whole, I found them a couple of morose, unsociable Highland pedants,—sullen, because they had nothing to say; and reserved, because they were afraid of exposing their mighty ignorance. Indeed, it is all one to the minister what sort of men they may be, as the longer their pupils are in finishing their learning, the longer they are his boarders,—thirteen or fourteen of them at least; and this consideration, without doubt, makes the reverend rogue wink at their shallowness.

At Edinburgh, I passed several days without having [MS. torn and mutilated] enough to determine on anything. At length the [MS. mutilated] of my last half-crown raised me from my lethargy, and I am now earning more in a sphere which you shall be made acquainted with hereafter. The only thing left for me to tell you is, that on Thursday I went to the Pantheon, resolved to deliver my sentiments on the night's debate. The house was uncommonly crowded. In the course of debating, a long and languid pause occurred. I seized the wished-for opportunity; and with a

melancholy phiz, delivered the enclosed speech, and was crowned with the most *unbounded applause*.

I am,

DEAR SIR,

Yours sincerely,

ALEXANDER WILSON.

P.S.—Direct to the care of Mr. James Kennedy, manufacturer, at the High School, Cannongate, Edinburgh.

\* LETTER X.

In 'Jail'—thanks for a 'token' of friendship—gloom and wretchedness of a Prison—'unable to pay' the sum awarded, £12 13s. 6d.—Oath made—'Mr. Sharp resolved to punish'—'I shall know, after a little,' what is to be the outcome.

*To the Same,*

At Mr. Campbell's Mill, Johnstone :  
Paisley Jail, 21st May, 1793.

DEAR SIR,

When I last wrote you, nothing but absolute necessity would have prevailed on me to make the requisition I then did, and sorry I was that *that* necessity should ever had cause to exist. I sincerely thank you, sir, for the token of friendship which you sent me, which I will repay as soon as Providence shall open the door for my release from this new scene of misery, this assemblage of wretches and wretchedness ; where the rumbling of bolts, the hoarse exclamations of the jailor, the sighs and sallow countenances of the prisoners, and the general gloom of the place require all the exertions of resolution to be cheerful and resigned to the will of fate, particularly those who have no prospect or expectation of liberty. Being perfectly unable to pay the sum awarded against me, which is *in toto* £12 13s. 6d., I yesterday gave oath accordingly, and had the comfort to be told that Mr.

Sharp was *resolved* to punish me though it should cost him a little money. However, I shall know after a little more confinement of two days or so. Meantime, to have a line or two from you would be an additional favour to,

DEAR SIR,

Your obliged servant,

A. WILSON.

PAISLEY JAIL, 21st May, 1793.

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LETTER XI.

'At length in America' and his nephew William Duncan—The ship 'Swift'—did not write to save from anxiety, but fears he mistook—'350 passengers'—very sick—'Spoke' Caledonia—An Irish Patriot 'Dr. Reynolds' found on board—'Islands' of Ice [Icebergs]—A great Storm—A seaman overboard—Land in sight—Reedy Island—Passenger drowned—arrived at Newcastle—walked to Wilmington—on to Philadelphia—Weather extremely hot—'Provisions' high-priced—In the Woods—James Robertson—Home message to his Father and Mother.

*To his Father and Mother.*

PHILADELPHIA, UNITED STATES, July 25, 1794.

DEAR FATHER AND MOTHER,

You will see by this letter that I am at length in America, as is also my nephew, William Duncan—both in good health. We sailed in the ship "Swift," from Belfast Loch, on Friday the 23d of May, about six in the morning, at which time I would have wrote you ; but, hoping we would have a speedy passage, and feeling for the anxiety I feared you might be under in knowing we were at sea, I purposely omitted writing till our arrival in America. I fear that by this conduct I have given you more unhappiness than I am aware of ; if I have, I hope you will forgive me, for I intended otherwise. We had 350 passengers—a mixed multitude of men, women, and children. Each berth between decks was made to hold them all, with scarce a foot for each. At first sight I own, it appeared to me almost impossible that one half of them could survive ; but, on looking around, and



seeing some whom I thought not much stouter than myself, I thought I might have a chance as well as the rest or some of them. I asked Willy if he was willing, and he saying he was, we went up to Belfast immediately for our clothes ; and in two days after we got on board, she sailed. We were very sick four days, but soon recovered ; and having a good, steady, fair breeze for near a fortnight, had hopes of having an excellent voyage. On the third day, and just as we lost sight of land, we spoke the *Caledonia* of Greenock, a letter of marque, bound for the Bay of Fundy ; on Monday following, Dr. Reynolds, who was tried and condemned by the Irish House of Lords, was discovered to be on board, and treated all the passengers and crew with rum-grog, which we drank to the confusion of despots, and the prosperity of liberty all the world over. Till the 17th of June we had pretty good weather, and only buried an old woman and two children. On the 18th, we fell in with an amazing number of islands of ice ; I counted at one time thirty-four in sight, some of whom that we nearly passed were more than twice as high as our main-top gallant mast-head, and of great extent ; we continued passing among them, with a good breeze, for two days, during which time we ran at least five knots an hour. On the 20th we had a storm of wind, rain, thunder, and lightning, beyond anything I had ever witnessed. Next day a seaman dropped overboard ; and, though he swam well and made for the ship, yet the sea running high, and his clothes getting wet he perished within six yards of a hen-coop, which he had thrown over to him. On the 11th July we could plainly perceive land from the mast-head ; but a terrible gale of wind blowing all night from the shore, it was Sunday before we had again the satisfaction of seeing it, scarcely perceptible through the fog ; but a pilot coming on board, and the sun rising, we found ourselves within the Capes of the Delaware—the shore on land having the appearance of being quite flat, and only a complete forest of trees. About seven at night, having had a good breeze all day, we cast anchor at a place called Reedy Island, where one of the cabin passengers, and the first man who leapt ashore in the long-boat, was drowned in returning to the ship. We arrived at Newcastle the next day about mid-day, where we were all as



happy as mortals could be ; and being told that Wilmington was only five miles up the river, we set out on foot through a flat woody country, that looked in every respect like a new world to us, from the great profusion of fruit that everywhere overhung our heads, the strange birds, shrubs, &c., and came at length to Wilmington, which lies on the side of a hill, about a mile from the Delaware, and may be about as large as Renfrew, or perhaps larger. We could hear of no employment here in our business, though I saw two silk looms going, and some jennies preparing for establishing some manufactory of cotton cloth ; but they proceed with so little spirit that I believe it may be some years before half a dozen of looms can be employed. From Wilmington we proceeded to Philadelphia, twenty-nine miles distant, where very little of the ground is cleared ; the only houses we saw were made of large logs of wood, laid one over another ; and what crops we could see, consisted of Indian corn, potatoes, and some excellent oats. We made free to go into a good many farm-houses on the road, but saw none of that kindness and hospitality so often told of them. We met with three weavers by the way, who live very quiet, and well enough, but had no place for any of us. At length we came within sight of Philadelphia, which lies something like Glasgow, but on a much flatter piece of ground, extending in breadth along the Delaware for near three miles. Here we made a more vigorous search than ever for weavers, and found, to our astonishment, that, though the city contains between forty and fifty thousand people, there is not twenty weavers among the whole, and these had no conveniences for journeymen, nor seemed to wish for any : so after we had spent every farthing we had, and saw no hopes of anything being done that way, we took the first offer of employment we could find, and have continued so since.

The weather here is so extremely hot, that even though writing in an open room, and dressed—according to the custom—in nothing but thin trowsers and waistcoat, and though it is near eleven at night, I am wet with sweat. Judge, then, what it must be at noon, with all kinds of tradesmen that come to this country : none with less encouragement than weavers ; and those of that trade would do well to consider first how they would agree with

the spade or wheelbarrow under the almost intolerable heat of a scorching sun. I fear many of them never think of these. Necessities of life are here very high, owing to the vast number of emigrants from St. Domingo and France. Flour, though you will scarce believe it, is near double the price to what it is in Scotland; beef, ninepence of their currency, which is about sixpence of ours; shoes, two dollars; and boarding in the most moderate houses, two dollars and a-half; while house-rents are most exorbitantly high. I was told yesterday, by a person who had come immediately from Washington, that that city does not contain above two dozen of houses, and if it come not faster on than they have done, it won't contain a thousand inhabitants these twenty years. As we passed through the woods on our way to Philadelphia, I did not observe one bird such as those in Scotland, but all much richer in colour. We saw a great number of squirrels, snakes about a yard long, and some red birds, several of which I shot for our curiosity.

Let John Findlayson know that I dined with his brother-in-law, James Robertson, and spent three hours in the woods with him near his own house. I was sorry there were some things I could not inform him of, but he will hear from himself soon. He lives in a very agreeable place, not far from where I was directed to seek him; keeps a cow, and has a decent family of children, the oldest girl may be about thirteen or more. He is very fond that one of us should come and work with him, as he has three looms and only one hand beside himself,—and I believe Willy will go there next week. I offer my best wishes to Thomas Wotherspoon and wife, and would write to him, but the ship sails early to-morrow. I have wrote to both my brothers-in-law, and I hope you will write me as soon as possible, as I am uneasy to hear if you are both well, or if you have lately heard any word from Rob, as it is reported here that Howe and the French fleet have had an engagement. I am sorry I have so little room.—I beg once more you will write to me soon, and direct to the care of Mr. William Young, Bookseller, Chesnut Street, Philadelphia. And wishing you both as much happiness as this world can afford,

I remain, your affectionate Son,

ALEXANDER WILSON.

## LETTER XII.

No letters from 'home'—season unwholesome and sultry—yellow fever epidemic in Philadelphia—war threatened by the 'French Directory'—great preparations being made for it—crops a failure—for 'three years' boarded with a German family.

*To his Father.*

Milestown, Bristol Township, Philadelphia County,  
August 22, 1798.

DEAR FATHER,

If I were to judge of my friends in Scotland by their cold silence to all my letters these two years, I might perhaps wrong them, but I will be more generous with them, and conclude that they have all wrote me ten or twelve times a-piece, and all miscarried; so now we are on good terms again, and I shall write this with as real good will to their amusement as if I had received them all. This is the most unwholesome and sultry season in the western woody world. For two months the heat has been intense, the thermometer at noon in the shade always above 90, sometimes 96, and at one time 101, which is three degrees above blood-heat. The consequence has been that the Yellow Fever—that American pestilence—has broke out in Philadelphia with great mortality, and the inhabitants are flying to the country in all directions.

But a still worse scourge is likely to fall on us soon—that monstrous mother of almost every human evil—War. The French Directory, by their dishonourable conduct towards us, have utterly lost the esteem and good wishes of the Americans, and have, by their threatenings, raised such a spirit of union and military order among all our citizens, and such a contempt for the French rulers, that nothing but their return to the principles of justice and true liberty, and restoration of our plundered property, will ever do away. Ships of war are building in every seaport, and every merchant vessel is armed. We can raise in two days an army of two hundred thousand foot and cavalry, and our internal resources of provisions, arms, and ammunition are inexhaustible. Yet I sincerely deplore the coming calamity.

Gainers or losers, the effects of war are ruinous. It corrupts the morals of youth, and disseminates every species of vice over the countries wherever it goes. But indeed it is needless to spend the little time we have in thinking on the badness of the times, for I am persuaded while the world remains there will be tyrants and freemen, reformers and revolutionists, peace and war, till the end of time ; and he is only the wise and happy man who, in following a peaceful employment through private life, intermeddles with politics as little as possible. Provisions have fallen greatly here within these twelve months, so have the wages of labour. Our crops of wheat almost universally failed, owing to the Hessian fly, and in many places the buck-wheat and clover have been stripped and eat up by the grasshoppers ; a circumstance never remembered to have happened, and looked on by the country people as an omen of some great calamity. I hope, however, that the greatest will be in the loss of grain. I walked through a field last evening, where at every step they rose in thousands.

The family where I have boarded in nearly these three years, and two-thirds of the inhabitants, are Germans ; a hardy, sober, industrious, and penurious race of people, lovers of money, and haters of Irishmen—the very sound of an Irishman's voice will make a Dutchman draw down his eyebrows, gather up his pockets, and shrink into himself like a tortoise. Their religion is a mixture of Presbyterianism, Universalism, and Catholic ; very ignorant of books, and very superstitious ; firm believers in astrology and necromancy. Many of them will neither kill a steer, let blood, cut hair, or draw a tooth, but in a particular time of the moon. All their cures are performed by charms and spells, and the greatest confidence is placed on the most ridiculous forms, words, and gibberish. I thought that the Highlands of Scotland might challenge any place on earth for witches, ghosts, and supernatural agency, but those of our neighbourhood are ten times more knowing, more numerous, and more obliging. Before I could converse with them in their own language, or read their books, I could not have believed them or any people so credulous, but I have read in some of their books such stuff as would make the gravest philosopher on earth laugh at their

notions. However, they are sober and very punctual in their payments, and have of late begun to be very careful in educating their children in the English language, and I have always experienced much kindness and esteem from them.

I should be happy, dear parents, to hear from you, and how my brother and sisters are. I hope David will be a good lad, and take his father's advice in every difficulty. If he does, I can tell him he will never repent it. If he does not, he may regret it bitterly with tears. This is the advice of a brother with whom he has not yet had time to be much acquainted, but who loves him sincerely. I should wish also that he would endeavour to improve himself in some useful parts of learning, to read books of information and taste, without which a man in any country is but a clodpole; but beyond every thing else, let him indulge the deepest gratitude to God, and affectionate respect for his parents. I have thought it my duty, David, to recommend these amiable virtues to you, because I am your brother, and very probably may never see you. In the experience I have had among mankind, I can assure you that such conduct will secure you many friends, and support you under your misfortunes; for if you live you must meet with them—they are the lot of life.

Billy and Isabel were both well four days ago; he is mowing, and Isabel has gone to the country with Mr. Dobson's family, till the sickness be over.

I have observed that William Duncan has a strong desire to come to America, and I don't wonder at it, while so many of his children are here. Were I persuaded that my sister and him could reconcile their minds to be for ever removed from their native country, placed in a country where the language, customs, and employment were totally different, where a labourer who works under a broiling sun will perspire at the rate of two pints an hour; I have seen Billy myself, while a-mowing, take off his shirt and wring it every two hours, I say where the language, the customs, and every thing that they had been so long accustomed to think right, would be laughed at, and they themselves looked on as unknown, and perhaps suspected strangers.—If they can reconcile themselves to these things, the great expense, and the

uncertainty of the climate agreeing with their constitutions (for it has been, I fear, fatal to mine), I shall not advise them against it. I hope that they will not look upon this as unkind in me. Whatever others may think, I have spoken my opinion most openly, and beg they will think on it. There is no employment that would suit him here so well as weaving, and having a cow for his family, or land sufficient to raise his bread, thirty or forty miles from Philadelphia; and if he and my sister are resolved to attempt it, I doubt not but with health the boys and him might do very well. He, as well as my sister, will find two great assistants in their son and daughter, and nothing will be more rejoicing to me than to see them once more, and to give them all the assistance in my power.

Dear parents, I request once more that you will write unto me by the earliest opportunity, that you will tell my old comrade, Thomas Wotherspoon, that I should be most happy to hear from him and Jean; and remember me to William Duncan and John Bell, and to Mall and Jean,—to William M'Gavin and John Wright, my old bed-fellow, (I hear he has got a better one now)—to John M'Arthur, to whom I have frequently wrote, without one line in return since Sept., '96,—to William Greenlees and Effy,—most heartily to John Black and James Frazer; James minds me of one of the priests—he is continually preaching up the glories of this new world to his neighbours, and sending them a-packing like so many pilgrims, but you'll never catch James on that journey himself. When did you hear from Robert Urie and Bell? I have heard nothing of either of the two since the action of the 1st June, '96. James Robb is well. Mr. Orr, of King's Street, writing-master, is well. I never could get the least intimation of the gentleman Mr. M'Gavin enquires for. I have not heard from James or William Mitchell these ten months. James Robertson and family are all well.

I refer you for our political intelligence to your own newspapers. I am sorry to see such anarchy and bloodshed in Ireland. From Scotland I hear nothing. I have not seen it mentioned in the papers since the affair of Tranent. Every fresh piece of news from England is published here the moment it arrives, and flies from town to town with the rapidity of lightning; we have some-



times news here in five weeks, and often in six from England, but all correspondence with France is suspended. Our frigates and sloops of war are at present out cruising in search of French privateers, but I have not heard of any prizes they have made except one. Our President, John Adams, is very popular at present. Washington has accepted the commission of commander-in-chief, and they talk of him with enthusiasm as equal to any army of 100,000 ! This has always been the way of the people in all countries, and of those whom they have idolized, angels or devils—the saviours of their countrymen or arch-traitors. Who would pass one anxious thought for the possession of such precarious popularity ? I don't believe that Washington is one jot happier than I am, or than any poor man may be if he pleases.

I must now bid you farewell, as my paper is almost done. May Providence continue to bless you with health, peace, and content, and when the tragic-comic scene of life is over, may all meet in regions of bliss and immortality.

I am, till death,

DEAR FATHER,

Your truly affectionate son,

ALEXANDER WILSON.\*

\* The persons mentioned in this letter were friends and relatives of the poet. Billy—his nephew ; John Bell, William Duncan, and John Wright, his brothers-in-law. The latter two, with their families, went to America. Thomas Wotherspoon, William Mitchell, and Charles Orr, writing-master, were friends, and to each of them Wilson addressed Epistles (see Poems). M'Gavin, the author of the "Protestant," was likewise an intimate friend of the poet.—G.



## \* LETTER XIII.

The country—"come and see"—peace with France possible—prosperity of the United States—a grand future and destiny—Great Britain and Greece and Rome to be displaced—home messages. Postscript: Yellow fever in Philadelphia—appearance of the city—returning health—Duncan—intended purchase of land in State of New York—description—satisfaction—Bill.

*To his Father,*  
November, 1798.

I have in my former letters given so many particulars respecting this country that I think anything more on the subject would be superfluous. "Come and see" is now my motto.

It is probable that peace may still be preserved here yet. The French Directory have made professions to that purpose to us, and it is neither the interest nor inclination of Americans to declare offensive war against any nation. There is universal peace along our whole frontiers with the Indian tribes, and the Cherokees have lately, for certain considerations, ceded to the United States upwards of 800,000 acres of land. This country, notwithstanding the ravages of the French and yellow fever, is rapidly advancing in power, population, and prosperity. Our boundary is continually extending towards the West, and may yet, after some ages, include those vast unexplored regions that lie between us and the Western Ocean. Men of all nations, and all persuasions and professions find here an asylum from the narrow-hearted illiberal persecutions of their own Governments, and bring with them . . . . . [worn out] respective countries. So that it is not impossible that when Great Britain and the former enlightened countries of Greece [and Rome] will have degenerated into [their] ancient barbarism and ignorance, this will be the

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\* The original of this letter is in my own possession. It is much worn and tattered, so that places are inevitably left unfilled in, and certain words conjecturally given. The end of the long postscript is carried over to the top of the first page, leaving no room for the usual commencement 'Dear Father' or the like.—G.

theatre of arts and science ; the most populous and powerful empire in the world. My kind wishes, dear father, once more for your welfare and happiness, and that of your family and all enquiring friends ; farewell.

ALEXANDER WILSON.

November 20th.—Since writing the within, this unfortunate city has been dreadfully afflicted. 4000 inhabitants have fallen victims to the yellow fever. The population of Philadelphia is calculated at 65,000 souls, and five weeks ago there were not more than 8000 in the city. You might stand half-an-hour at the most public square at mid-day, without seeing or hearing a human being, except the drivers of the dead-carts ; but, thank God, health is again restored, and the city looks as gay and as busy as ever. Isabell and William are both in good health, as well as myself. William and I have these two years been planning out the purchase of a piece of land in some healthy and fertile part of the country, convenient to a market for the disposal of produce. In the State of New York there is a tract of perhaps the richest land in the United States, situated about 270 miles to the north, or north and by west of Philadelphia, lying between the Senica and Cayuga Lakes, about 40 miles long and 6 to [worn out], and beginning to be well settled. After consulting together, about two months ago, William set out on foot to see the country and learn further particulars. He travelled it in eight days, and remained there nearly a week. The soil is rich beyond any land he had ever seen, and the situation exceeding healthy ; and for game of all sorts remarkable, both of deer, bear, turkeys, and water-fowl in incredible numbers. The best of the land can be purchased for 5 dollars an acre, [worn out]. . . . advantage . . . . probably in a few years be flourishing settlements. We have, therefore, come to the determination of purchasing 150 acres on the borders of Senica Lake, and removing there in the Spring ; where, in a few years, if health still continue, we shall make the woods give place to fields of pasture and plenty, and see our little stock improving and multiplying around us, far from the noise and tumults of the world. Can there be a more independent life

than this? Every individual that has gone there has prospered and nothing is wanting on our part to do so likewise, but perseverance. Had John Bell not been irresolute, he might have [joined] us, and even yet it is not too late; but if he is still doubtful or afraid I shall advise him no more.

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† LETTER XIV.

Orders for 'a stile of brass'—a 'dial' finished—a letter from 'nephew.'

To Mr. CHARLES ORR.

— April, 1799.

DEAR SIR,

Will you please to call at Mr. Biggs, mathematical instrument maker, No. 81 Front street, and employ him to make me a stile of brass 1-6th of an inch thick, exactly corresponding with the enclosed pattern. I suppose he may be able to finish it before Mr. ——— leaves town, and who will pay you. I finished the other dial completely to my mind, and employed a clumsy blacksmith to make me a stile, who ruined the whole marble in driving it in, and I broke it to pieces. If Biggs cannot finish it in time, I shall wait until you find an opportunity of sending it, or shall bring it out yourself. I had a letter from my nephew, dated Ap. 28, at which time he was in excellent health, sweeping away and burning down the woods. I am , . .

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† LETTER XV.

A 'visit' much wished—a sense of injury—a cordial welcome to pleasant scenes promised.

*To the Same.*

At Mr. Dobson's Book Store,  
Second Street between Market and Chesnut Street,  
Milestown, May 25, '99.

SIR,

Considering the short distance between this and Philadelphia, the many pressing invitations you have received to come and

see me, and the friendship and respect I most sincerely declare I have for you, it is matter of regret to me that you seem insensible to them all, nor ever do me the pleasure of *one visit*. Have I injured you? Am I unworthy your acquaintance? Are you afraid of contaminating yourself with the rusticity of my manners and address? I have lived, to be sure, five years in the woods, pursuing a business the most apt of any to render peevish and pedantic the best disposition in the world, and it were vain indeed in me to hope that I had escaped without a touch of both the one and the other; but what of that? Have not we all our failings and vanities? and ought we not rather to smile at and forgive, than to be too sensible and feeling on these occasions? Come out, Mr. Orr, and see me; you shall find an open and frank hospitality such as my brother or best friend would receive. The sight of the green meadows, the singing of birds, the fragrance of flowers and blossoms, and the conversation of myself and the rest of our clod-hoppers, will be an excellent contrast to the burning streets, the growling oyster men, the stinking sewers and polite company of Philadelphia. You will receive from the bearer the money you paid for me to the mathematical instrument maker, with my thanks for your trouble; and if you are determined never to visit me, your good disposition, I hope, will not refuse to let me know by letter what I have done to deserve such neglect and contempt, that I may correct myself for the future, if I have done amiss.

I believe this is the first letter I ever wrote to you. You used to visit me,—perhaps I seemed sorry to see you and happy when you went away. If so, may every soul that I visit spit in my face and kick me from their company. If otherwise (which your own heart must testify) may every friend I love receive me with as sincere pleasure as Wilson *has* received and *would* receive Orr.

I am with respect,

SIR,

Your obedient Servant,

ALEXANDER WILSON.

## † LETTER XVI.

Letters very welcome—School 'thinner'—age—'surveying' of land—'S. continues to increase in bulk'—a sister's death very composedly received by a brother—“any other news that's curious?”

To Mr. WM. DUNCAN.\*

Milestown, July 1, 1800.

DEAR BILL,

I had the pleasure of yours by the hands of Mr. P. this day ; and about four weeks ago I had another, directed to Mr. Dobson's care, both of which were as welcome to me as any thing, but your own self could be. I am just as you left me, only my school has been thinner this season than formerly.

I have had four letters from home, all of which I have answered. Their news are—Dull trade—provisions most exorbitantly high—R.'s sister dead—the Seedhills mill burnt to the ground—and some other things of less consequence.

I doubt much if stills could be got up in time to do any thing at the distilling business this winter. Perhaps it might be a safer way to take them up, in the spring, by the Susquehanna. But if you are determined, and think that we should engage in the business, I shall be able to send them up either way. P. tells me that his two stills cost about forty pounds. I want to hear more decisively from you before I determine. Sooner than live in a country exposed to the ague, I would remain where I am.

O. comes out to stay with me two months, to learn surveying, algebra, &c. I have been employed in several places about this summer to survey, and have acquitted myself with credit, and to my own satisfaction. I should not be afraid to engage in any job with the instruments I have.

S. continues to increase in bulk, money and respectability ; a continual current of *elevenpenny bits* pouring in, and but few running out.

We are very anxious to hear how you got up ; and well pleased that you played the Horse Jockey so luckily. If you are fixed in

the design of distilling, you will write me, by the first opportunity, before winter sets in, so that I may arrange matters in time.\*

I have got the schoolhouse enlarged, by contributions among the neighbours. In summer the school is, in reality, not much; but in winter, I shall be able to teach with both pleasure and profit.

When I told R. of his sister's death, "I expected so," said Jamie, "any other news that's curious?" So completely does long absence blunt the strongest feelings of affection and friendship. May it never be so with you and me, if we should never meet again. On my part it is impossible, except God in his wrath, should deprive me of my present soul, and animate me with some other.

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† LETTER XVII.

Pleasure of epistolary correspondence and 'artificial conversation' with advantages  
—exchange of letters urged—'economy and frugality.'

To Mr. CHARLES ORR, Philomath.  
Milestown, Monday noon, July 21, 1800.

DEAR SIR,

You and I have often conversed together on the use and pleasure of epistolary correspondence, which is, in fact, nothing more than artificial conversation; with this advantage, that we are in no danger of being interrupted by the person we are in conversation with, and are always certain to be listened to; whereas in verbal conversation it often happens that, through impatience to give vent to the ideas that strike us while our friend is speaking, or from something advanced by him that we think absurd, we can hardly hear him out, and so the dispute becomes a mere battle of *words*, and instead of producing pleasure or conviction to either party, begets ill-will and bigoted obstinacy of opinion. Now, Mr. Orr, as you and I are both lovers of truth—as we are subject to

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\* Duncan at this time resided upon the farm mentioned above, which was situated in the township of Ovid, Cayuga County, New York.—G.

the failings of human nature as well as others, and as we are both capable of giving and receiving information and advice to each other—why may we not avail ourselves of the advantages that this method of communicating holds out? I, for my part, have many things to enquire of you, of which at different times I form very different opinions, and at other times can form no distinct decided opinion at all. Sometimes they appear dark and impenetrable; sometimes I think I see a little better into them; now I see them as plain as broad day, and again they are as dark to me as midnight. In short, the moon puts not on more variety of appearance to the eye than many subjects do to my apprehension, and yet in themselves they still remain the same.

I have also many things of a more interesting and secret nature which I will in confidence entrust to your examination, that may at least afford you matter of diversion to laugh at, and an opportunity of laughing me out of them likewise.

I have nothing more at heart at present than the propriety of pursuing a plan of economy, and of observing the strictest frugality for the future in all my proceedings. Tell me if you think my resolutions laudable, and what advantages I may expect to reap from a rigid adherence to them. You see I have only scrawled this hasty preparatory billet. Do you the same. It is the matter, not the manner, I care for.

I am, with sincerity,

Yours affectionately,

ALEXANDER WILSON.

Monday noon, July 21, 1800.



## † LETTER XVIII.

Moods—'a pretty handsome compliment'—Nature—birds and beasts—celibacy,  
Is it not criminal?

*To the Same.*

Milestown, July 23, 1800.

DEAR SIR,

We don't always feel in a mood for conversation. Just so it is in writing. Sometimes the sprightly ideas flow out irresistibly. At other times we sit scratching our stupified noddles for some dull idea, which is dragged out like a thief to the gallows. This is the situation at this time with my pericranium. You will therefore forgive me if I trouble you no farther than just to acknowledge the receipt of yours of the 21st. I congratulate you, sir, on the specimen of epistolary correspondence with which you honoured me on Monday. The sentiments are just, well expressed, and perfectly correspond with my own. And that, you know, is a pretty handsome compliment from one like me, who thinks so much of my own self, my own performances, and my own opinions.

I troubled you yesterday with the subject of Frugality—that letter of Tuesday the 22nd has perhaps been lost—I shall now ask your opinion on a still more interesting subject, and shall first relate the circumstances that impressed this subject so strongly on my mind.

It was about the middle of last May, one morning in taking my usual rounds, I was delighted with the luxuriance of nature that everywhere smiled around me. The trees were covered with blossoms, enclosing the infant fruit that was, at some future day, to give existence to others. The birds, in pairs, were busily engaged preparing their nests to accommodate their little offspring. The colt pranced by the side of its dam; the bleating of lambs was heard from every farm; and insects, in thousands, were preparing to usher their multitudes into being. In short, all nature, every living thing around me, seemed cheerfully engaged in fulfilling that great command, "Multiply and replenish the earth," excepting myself. I stood like a blank in this interesting scene,

like a note of discord in this universal harmony of love and self-propagation ; everything I saw seemed to reproach me as an un-social wretch separated from the great chain of nature, and living only for myself. No endearing female regarded me as her other self, no infant called me its father, I was like a dead tree in the midst of a green forest, or like a blasted ear amidst the yellow harvest. Full of these mortifying reflections, I wandered homewards, and entered my lodging ; there my landlord and his amiable spouse were playing with their children and smiling on each other with looks of mutual affection and parental pride. "O despicable wretch," said I to myself, 'what is all thy learning, books, or boasted acquisitions, to a companion like that, or innocents like these whom thou could'st call thine own ? By all that's good," cry'd I, "I shall share these pleasures though ten thousand unseen distresses lurk among them."

To you, Mr. Orr, who know me so well, it is unnecessary to add that these resolutions were soon forgot in study and abandoned for some algebraic solution or mathematical pursuit. But I have to ask you, is it not criminal to persist in a state of celibacy ? And how comes it, that those whom science allures in her train, and whose hearts are most susceptible of the finer feelings of the soul, are so forgetful of this first and most exquisite of all human enjoyments, the enjoyment of a virtuous wife and little innocents in whom they can trace their own features blended together ?

I beg pardon for detaining you so long. I have been unintentionally led away into a train of speculation which I only intended to hint at, and which all I can say in their favour is that they are absolutely *sincere*.

Excuse all blunders, and believe me to be with great regard,  
yours sincerely,

ALEXANDER WILSON.

Wednesday, July 23, 1800.

## † LETTER XIX.

A frolicsome address—time precious—how a day was spent—‘Mr. Sterne.’

*To the Same.*

Professor of Astronomy, Mathematics, Algebra, Geography,  
History, Poetry, Criticism, &c., &c., and Practical  
Astronomy.

On the School Green, Milestown, August 6, 1800.

DEAR SIR,

Time has always been accounted among wise men the most precious gift of God to man; and has been, generally speaking, received and used as the most worthless and despicable. O ungrateful return for such invaluable bounty! But let us, my friend, profit by our past prodigality and husband well this precious commodity; who knows how soon it may be taken from us!

I have been led to these reflections by a retrospect of this day. Rose half an hour before day. Sauntered abroad, surveying the appearance of the fields, and contemplating the progressive advances of morning, the appearance of the moon, &c., without suggesting or having suggested one sentiment of grateful adoration to the great Architect of the Universe, without learning one truth that I was before ignorant of. Wrought one solitary problem before breakfast, composed eight lines of rhyme at noon, and am now writing these observations near evening. Thus fourteen hours have passed almost unimproved away, and thus have thousands of precious hours so perished! Not one prayer said, not one thought of matrimony entered my mind. An old bachelor, verging to the gloomy regions of celibacy and old age, and clusters of dimple-cheeked, soft-eyed females in every log hut around, and sighing for a husband. O shame! By the Immortal gods, time and youth and opportunities were not given to be so thrown away. We must improve time. We must make advances in some one or all of these important duties, which, Mr. Sterne says, devoid of, a human being is undeserving the name

Man. That is, to write a book, plant a tree, beget a child (I ought to have said marry a wife first), build a house, and learn something every day that he did not before know. Without this done, Sterne won't allow us to lay claim even to the name of *Man*. But while I am thus reprobating the waste of time, I am guilty of a double crime this moment, in losing my own time to write, what perhaps you will consider also lost time in reading.

Excuse blunders.—I am, my dear friend, yours sincerely,

ALEXANDER WILSON.

Milestown Monastery, August 6, 1800.

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† LETTER XX.

The 'Trustees of the School'—in ill health—'once more the dominie.'

*To the Same.*

Care of Mr. Dobson, Bookseller,

Second Street between Market and Chesnut Street, Philadelphia :  
Milestown, Sept. 15, 1800.

DEAR SIR,

The day on which the Trustees were to meet arrived, but I said not a word to either of them, partly through shame and partly through pride. About five in the evening they assembled, accompanied by a candidate for the school ; a very genteel young man. They spoke of me looking much better than I did a few days before. I talked with the candidate about the average income of the school, which he had been told was at least fifty scholars a quarter. I told him what it had nearly averaged me, which never amounted to forty, one quarter with another. His own school contained at present forty-five, with a good dwelling-house. The Trustees said that I looked so well that, perhaps with a few days' more relaxation, I might be able to begin again myself. I told them that I had twice given up the school from the same reason, want of health, and if they could suit themselves with a person with a constitution better fitted to encounter the hard duties of a school, I was satisfied, but I was sorry still to part with them. I was attached to the children and to the people,

and, if they would allow me one week more to ramble about, I would once more engage, though I should die in their service. My request was immediately acceded to, and I am once more the dominic of Milestown school.

I am most sincerely yours,

ALEXANDER WILSON.

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† LETTER XXI.

'Mutual agreement' to correspond—School as before—'debating' society—riding.

*To the Same,*

Milestown, 24th September, 1800.

DEAR SIR,

I take the opportunity of Mr. ——'s going to town to write you a few lines by way of refreshing your memory, as I am afraid that you have forgot the mutual agreement we made, to correspond as often as convenient. I have begun the old way again, have about 30 scholars, which number may increase to 40 before the quarter is concluded. I study none, and take my morning and evening ramble regularly. Our debating society commences again on Saturday first. The proposed question—"Is the cultivation of the vine an object worthy the attention of the American farmer?"—will produce I think an agreeable debate. I am anxious to hear from you. Do you spend any of your leisure hours with the puzzling chaps, algebra, trigonometry, &c., or are you wholly absorbed in the study of mechanics? You must write me particularly. I think I shall take a ride 15 or 20 miles on Saturday. I find riding agrees better with me than any other exercise. I always feel cheerful after it, and can eat confoundedly. Have you made any new discoveries in the Heaven above, or the earth beneath, with your telescope or microscope? I expect to hear from Billy in less than a week, as two persons have gone up more than three weeks ago. Do not forget to write.

Your sincere and affectionate friend,

ALEX. WILSON.

Milestown, September 24, 1800.

## † LETTER XXII.

'Orations' received—almost 'distracted'—tragi-comedy of — love.

*To the Same*, Writing Master,  
Dock Street, Philadelphia: 1st May, 1801.

MY DEAR SIR,

I have received all the Orations. I am indeed much obliged to your friendship, and request that you would come out this evening and stay with me till Sunday evening. I have matters to lay before you that have almost distracted me. Do come. I shall be so much obliged. Your friendship and counsel may be of the utmost service to me. I shall not remain here long. It is impossible I can. I have now no friend but yourself, and *one* whose friendship has involved us both in ruin or threatens to do so. You will find me in the schoolhouse.

I am, most affectionately yours,

ALEX. WILSON.

May 1st, 1801.

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 † LETTER XXIII.

Circumstances pecuniarily — wretched schools — 'drunken' teachers — present School taken from absolute necessity—'lost all relish for this country'— must return 'to try old Scotia once more.'

*To the Same.*

Care of Mr. Dobson, Bookseller, Philadelphia.  
Bloomfield, near Newark, N. Jersey, July 12th, 1801.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

If this letter reach you it will inform you that I keep school at 12s. per quarter, York currency, with 35 scholars, and pay 12s. per week for board, and 4s. additional for washing, and 4s. per week for my horse. After I parted with ———, the Quakers not coming to any agreement about engaging me, I left Wrightstown and steered for New York through a country entirely unknown to me, visited many wretched hovels of



schools by the way ; in four days reached York, and from every person who knew the ——, I received the most disagreeable accounts of them, viz., that —— had by too great a fondness for gaming and sometimes taking his scholars with him, entirely ruined his reputation and lost his business, and from his own mouth I learned that he expected jail every day for debts to a considerable amount. And —— is lost for every good purpose in this world and abandoned to the most shameful and excessive drinking, swearing, and wretched company. He called on me last Thursday morning in company with a hocus pocus man for whom he plays the clarionet. New York swarms with newly imported Irishmen of all descriptions, clerks, schoolmasters, &c. The city is very sickly ; —— and all the rest to whom I spoke of you believed that your labour here would be even more unsuccessful than in Philadelphia, and related so many stories to that purpose that I was quite discouraged. Mr. —— attempted it there, but was obliged to remove, and is now in Boston wandering through the streets insane. I staid only one night in York, and being completely run out except about 3 11-penny bits, I took the first school from absolute necessity, that I could find. I live six miles north from Newark and twelve miles from New York, in a settlement of canting, preaching, praying, and sniveling ignorant Presbyterians. They pay their minister 250 pounds a year for preaching twice a week, and their teacher 40 dollars a quarter for the 'most spirit-sinking laborious work, six, I may say twelve times weekly. I have no company, and live unknowing and unknown. I have lost all relish for this country, and, if Heaven spares me, I shall soon see the shores of old Caledonia. How happy I should be to have you beside me. I am exceedingly uneasy to hear from you. Dear Orr, make no rash engagements that may bind you for ever to this unworthy soil. I shall arrange all my affairs with Billy as expeditiously as I can. In the meantime I request you, my dear friend, to oblige me in one thing if you wish me well. Go out on Saturday to ——'s and try to get intelligence how Mr. ——'s family comes on, without letting any one know that you have heard from me. Get all the particulars you can, what is said of



me, and how Mrs. —— is, and every other information, and write me fully. I assure you I am very wretched, and this would give me the greatest satisfaction. —— will tell you everything, but mention nothing of me to anybody on any account. Conceal nothing that you hear, but inform me of everything. My dear friend, I beg you would oblige me in this. I am very miserable on this unfortunate account. I shall write you more fully on a variety of things I have to inform you of next week or as soon as I hear from you. Direct as above dated. I shall try to get information from a friend in Albany how matters would do there.

I am, most sincerely, your affectionate Friend while

ALEX. WILSON.

P.S.——— got the letter I wrote, but was so swallowed up in extravagance, I suppose, that he never replied to it.

Let us contrive a plan to leave this country and try old Scotia once more in company.

The bones of a mammoth or some gigantic animal are digging up here, of which I shall send the particulars in my next. I shall superintend the whole process.

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† LETTER XXIV.

'How blessed to have a friend'—his 'sweetheart' and evil-reports—fossils—  
Falls at Paterson—the 'schoolhouse' furniture—a witch—superstition.

*To the Same.*

Care of Mr. Dobson, Bookseller, Philadelphia.  
Bloomfield, July 23, 1801.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I received yours last evening. O how blessed it is to have one friend on whose affection, in the day of adversity, we can confide! As to the reports circulated in the neighbourhood of Milestown, were I alone the subject of them they would never disturb me, but she who loved me dearer than

her own soul, whose image is for ever with me, whose heart is broken for her friendship to me, she must bear all with not one friend to whom she dare unbosom her sorrows. Of all the events of my life nothing gives me such inexpressible misery as this. O my dear friend, if you can hear anything of her real situation, and whatever it be disguise nothing to me. Take a walk up to ——'s perhaps she has called lately there, and go out to ——'s on Saturday if possible. Let nobody whatever know that you have heard anything of me. In my last I told you —— was on the threshold of the jail. He has now passed the threshold and is fairly cag'd. —— is traversing the country with a hocus-pocus man in a poor scurvy plight playing the clarionet. The gentlemen who discovered the bones of which I spoke is a Mr. Kenzie, who was sinking a well for his paper mill in a swamp supposed formerly to have been the bed of a small creek that runs near. Six feet from the surface, under a stratum of sand 4 inches deep, they found several bones apparently belonging to the tail, 6 inches in breadth, with part of a leg-bone measuring upwards of 7 inches diameter at the joint, part of a rib 4 feet long, and many fragments in a decayed state. For want of hands no further search has yet been made, but it is intended to obtain the head and teeth if possible. The greatest curiosity in this State is the Falls of Paterson, where the river, which is about 40 yards broad, flows along a bed of solid rock. A sudden earthquake or some great convulsion has split this rock asunder across the whole breadth of the river, 6 or 8 feet apart and upwards of 70 deep, down which the whole river roars with a noise like thunder. This place is but 8 miles distant, and I went alone on Saturday to see it. The cotton works are completely deserted. I looked in at the weaving shops and saw nothing but hens roosting on the breast beams, and everything desolate. While I was in York a teacher there offered me his school-room, benches, &c., with all the scholars, amounting to 40 or 45, for 60 dollars cash, as he wished to decline the business. It is needless to add that I declined the honour of the bargain. The school-house in which I teach is situated at the extremity of a spacious level plain of sand thinly covered with grass. In the

centre of this plain stands a newly erected stone meeting-house, 80 feet by 60, which forms a striking contrast with my sanctum sanctorum, which has been framed of logs some 100 years ago, and looks like an old sentry box. The scholars have been accustomed to great liberties by their former teacher. They used to put stones in his pocket, &c., &c. I was told that the people did not like to have their children punished, but I began with such a system of terror as soon established my authority most effectually. I succeed in teaching them to read, and I care for none of their objections. The following anecdote will give you an idea of the people's character. A man was taken sick a few weeks ago and got deranged. It was universally said that he was bewitched by an old woman who lived adjoining. This was the opinion of the Dutch doctor who attended him, and at whose request a warrant was procured from the Justice for bringing the witch before the sick man, who, after tearing the old woman's flesh with his nails till the blood came, sent her home and afterwards recovered. This is a fact. The Justice who granted the warrant went through among the people with me. I intend to visit the poor woman myself and publish it to the world in the Newark newspapers for the amusement of the enlightened people of New Jersey. My dear Orr, I trust to your friendship for the intelligence I mentioned; write me fully as I will you on receipt. I left my great-coat with a Mr. ——— in Wrightstown, where ——— and I lodged. ——— will tell you his name. I wish you would write for it without letting ——— know anything of the matter. I left it in the stable. I owed him nothing. I shall be much obliged if you drop a line to him that it may be sent to Philadelphia, and this will be your warrant. Farewell. I shall write more fully next time.

Yours most sincerely,

ALEX. WILSON.

## † LETTER XXV.

Love-troubles—School increases—a copper mine near—local superstition, ‘seventh son’—enforced ‘grace’ asking—uncongenial situation—verses.

*To the Same.*

Bloomfield, August 7, 1801.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I received yours yesterday. I entreat you keep me on the rack no longer. Can you not spare *one* day to oblige me so much? Collect every information you can, but drop not a hint that you know anything of me. If it were possible you could see *her* or any one who *had*, it would be an unspeakable satisfaction to me. My dear Orr, the world is lost for ever to me and I to the world. No time nor distance can ever banish her image from my mind. It is for ever present with me, and my heart is broken with the most melancholy reflexions. Whatever you may think of me, my dear friend, do not refuse me this favour to know how she is. Were your situation mine, I declare from the bottom of my soul I would hazard everything to oblige you. I leave the management of it to yourself. But do not forget me. ——’s debts amount, as I have been informed, to two or three hundred pounds. —— is weaving in an old cellar at Elizabeth Town. My school increases; it is now 40. I have done nothing yet toward visiting the supposed witch. Some day soon I shall make it my business. There is a copper mine about 300 yards from my school-house which was lately wrought and many tuns of ore obtained from it. It is now neglected. Among the other effects of superstition here there lives just beside me a man who, being the seventh son, has power to cure the most inveterate ‘king’s evil’ by simply laying his hands on it. He has had three patients since my coming, and tells me he has cured hundreds. He says he can feel the disorder ascending his arms, and commonly is indisposed while performing a cure on his patients. They have come 100 miles to him. He is now a man of forty-five, and has practised this ‘laying on of hands’ since he was a boy. The people with whom I live are the vericst zealots

in religion, in praying, singing psalms and hymns. I was urged to ask blessing at table the first day and refused, but was insisted on till through mere shame I was obliged to perform, and am obliged to officiate every evening. God forgive me, for my heart is as distant from my lips then as from you to me. I consider it a monstrous hardship. I read the few lines of poetry you sent me to the old fellow, who wanted me to find out a tune for them that he might have the godly comfort of singing them by way of hymn, which shall certainly be done. As for myself, I have recourse to a thousand expedients to unburden my mind. I am really sometimes almost distracted on seeing how and where I am situated. Sometimes I try to turn it over to diversion, as in the following verses which I wrote this morning, and enclose without preface or apology, as you know my situation :—

Here ox-headed Ignorance gapes and is courted,  
And curst Superstition with visage distorted ;  
Sweet Science and Truth, while these monsters they cherish,  
Like the Babes in the Wood are abandoned to perish.

Here ten times a day they are hymning and praying,  
And 'glory to God' most religious paying ;  
Should Misery implore—that's a quite different story.  
They lock up the cash—but to God give the glory.

Young Venus ne'er lent to our females her graces,  
Like a duck's is their gait, like old pumpkins their faces ;  
No heart-winning looks to decoy or to charm us,  
Their teeth like corruption,—their breath, O enormous !

Here old wither'd witches crawl round ev'ry cabin,  
And butter from churns are eternally grabbing ;  
Ghosts, wizards, seventh sons, too, to cure the king's evil,  
One touch of their hand—and 'tis gone to the Devil.

Here the grim man of God, with a voice like a trumpet,  
His pulpit each Sunday bestampt and bethumpet ;  
On all but his *own* pours damnation and ruin,  
And heaves them to Satan for roasting and stewing.

There lonely and sad in his centry box standing,  
The windows unglazed, . . .  
A wretched exile murmurs A. B. C. grieving,  
In sounds slow and solemn from morning to even.

Before you write, take a walk up to ——'s as if to enquire for me, and try if you can get any information there. I know that she used sometimes to go and see her. Forgive me, my dear friend, if in anything I have offended you. The more of mankind I see, the more sincerely I value your friendship, and trust it shall only dissolve when time to me shall be no longer.

ALEX. WILSON.

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+ LETTER XXVI.

No answer to his letter—a 'poor old Scotchman'—living secluded—could not 'a bold push' be made together?—a French gentleman from St. Domingo—contributions to 'Newark Centinel'—sleep.

*To the Same.*

Care of Mr. Dobson, Bookseller, Philadelphia.

Bloomfield, September 14, 1801.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The last letter I wrote you I fondly thought would be answered, but I have waited now three weeks in vain. It was directed to you at M'Phail's China Store, Dock Street. I conjure you, my dear friend, by all that friendship which I always flattered myself you had for me that you will write me on receipt of this. ——'s father arrived here last week from Scotland and found his two sons, one in drunkenness and poverty, the other in a jail. Think with yourself what were the feelings of the poor old man on this occasion. —— is since liberated. I remain here perfectly secluded from the world. Your letters were all my company and amusement, but you have deprived me of even that. As I have now no hopes of ever being in Philadelphia, I ask it as a last favour that you would go out to the house where I lodged and request them to bring my trunk into Philadelphia that you may send it to me to New York. If my nephew has written me it will be in Mr. M'Innes', where I wish you would enquire. I again implore you to let me know how the family I mentioned are doing. You promised you would, and I shall take it as the



utmost kindness. Orr, I wish it were possible for you and I to unite our talents and exertions as we have often thought of doing. Would it not do by making a bold push? I can engage the reading, grammatical, and what other parts we should agree on—you the rest. I will with pleasure join you if you are willing, for if I must teach I will strain every effort to make something of it. This would be the best moment to attempt it. Think on the business, and I shall dispose of my horse, and unite with you to rise or fall together. There are hardly two on earth better acquainted with each other, and I think in conscience, without boasting of myself or flattering you, that we would do well. It is want of confidence alone that has kept us from both fame and fortune in our respective pursuits. At all events, write me per return of post. A French gentleman from St. Domingo has been with me to-day from Newark to teach him English. He is almost unintelligible. I have amused myself since I came here with writing detached pieces of poetry for the *Newark Centinel*, and have grown into some repute with the editor and his readers. A song entitled 'My Landlady's Nose' has been reprinted in a New York paper, and in a periodical publication called the *Museum*. Please to let the circumstances of the ———'s be confined to your own breast. You may let ——— know of the old gentleman's arrival. Once more I ask you to oblige me with an answer to this, and to excuse the hurried way in which it has been scribbled. In return for your next, I will send you something more entertaining. I am so uneasy to know how you come on, that I am every night conversing with you in my sleep.

I am, my dear Friend, yours most sincerely,

ALEXANDER WILSON.



## † LETTER XXVII.

A cloud on the friendship of Wilson and Orr, but the next Letter—in a week—shews it passed away.

*To the Same.*

Philadelphia, February 7, 1802.

Mr. ORR,

I have no faults to reproach you with. If I had, a consciousness of the number of my own would justly impose silence on me. My disposition is to love those who love me with all the warmth of enthusiasm, but to feel with the keenest sensibility the smallest appearance of neglect or contempt from those I regard. Of your friendship I have a thousand times been truly proud, have boasted of your intimacy with me and your professional abilities, almost wherever I went. I have poured out my soul into your bosom. If I have met or only supposed that I have, in the moments of anxiety and deep mental perturbation, met with cold indifference from the only quarter where I expected the sweets of friendship, they little know my heart who would expect it to make no impression on me. But Mr. Orr, you can never make me your enemy, and alas! I have friendship for no one. Distress preys continually on my mind. I have no friend, I ask for none. No friend on earth can ever remove my source of misery, and my acquaintance with you would but distress you. I wish you every happiness possible, and I doubt not but much is reserved for you. Above all I wish you to banish from your mind all suspicions of disesteem. I entertain none. I know there are people who are happy in insinuating their ideas to you, but I regard *their* love or hatred with equal indifference. I think so much necessary as explanation, but no more. You shall always share the good wishes and regard of

ALEXANDER WILSON.

## † LETTER XXVIII.

'Cannot part'—friendship like a re-united love—removing to Gray's Ferry School—better prospects.

*To the Same.*

Philadelphia, February 14, 1802.

DEAR SIR,

It is too much. I cannot part from you after what you have said. I renounce with pleasure every harsh thought I hastily entertained of you. From this moment let all past grievances be eternally forgotten. For myself, I give them to the winds. I know the value of a friend, and of such a friend, too well, to hope ever again for another on losing you. What is the world to that solitary being whose happiness only glads his own bosom and who weeps neglected? Its joys to such an insulated wretch are tasteless, its sad reverses almost insupportable. Friendship sweetens the most common occurrences of life, multiplies all our pleasures, lightens all our losses. When the sun of our prosperity sinks even in the deepest midnight of misfortune friendship sheds its cheering radiance around the unhappy wanderer, fills his heart with serenity, and points to happier prospects. I hope, my dear sir, you will excuse the melancholy turn my letter has taken. I cannot help it. It is always so, this some time. I never spent ten weeks more unhappy than these have been, and it will be some time before my mind recovers itself. Past hopes, present difficulties, and a gloomy futurity, have almost deranged my ideas, and too deeply affected me. The conduct and conversation of those who perhaps think me a dependant for residence is such that my spirit can never assimilate with. Amidst all these, your friendship returns to me once more like the blessed beams of heaven after a night of clouds and darkness. Let us now, dear sir, mutually forgive and henceforth enjoy the sweet interchange of conversation and unreserved sociability. Rocks and islands may separate for a while the stream that has long been united, but these past, the congenial waters will again meet, mingle, and be blended together. A small

accident may break a bone, but once judiciously reunited it is stronger than ever; *so be our friendship*. I shall leave this at your lodgings to-night, and to-morrow evening after nine shall call on you and take a walk together. On the 25th of this month I remove to the schoolhouse beyond Gray's Ferry to succeed the present teacher there. I shall recommence that painful profession once more with the same gloomy sullen resignation that a prisoner re-enters his dungeon or a malefactor mounts the scaffold; fate urges him, necessity me. The agreement between us is, they engage to make the school equal to 100 dollars per quarter, but not more than 50 are to be admitted. The present pedagogue is a noisy, outrageous fat old captain of a ship, who has taught these ten years in different places. You may hear him bawling 300 yards off. The boys seem to pay as little regard to it as ducks to the rumbling of a stream under them. I shall have many difficulties to overcome in establishing my own rules and authority. But perseverance overcometh all things.

I am, with sincere esteem,

Your still affectionate Friend,

ALEX. WILSON.

P.S.—Your coming up this afternoon has altered my resolution of not calling on you till to-morrow evening. Let it be this afternoon or evening. I am a little engaged till then. A. W.

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† LETTER XXIX.

From 'Gray's Ferry'—'harp new strung'—an 'irresistible desire to attempt some Scots pastorals' and win fame.

*To the Same.*

At Mr. Dixon's, Dock Street, Philadelphia.

Gray's Ferry, July 15, 1802.

MY WORTHY FRIEND,

I expected you all last Sunday, and walked out towards the ferry several times to meet you. I hope you were entertained more to your satisfaction than you could have been in the company of an insignificant country dominie rendered peevish

and melancholy by the daily cares and confinement of a most consuming employment. However, as I once told you before, I have a variety of resources in times of irritation and perplexity, but in none have I found consolation, such as to banish every pedantic pesteration, as in renewing my old pursuit of the Muses. My harp is new strung, and my soul glows with more ardour than ever to emulate those immortal bards who have gone before me. I have transcribed a variety of old pieces that have never been published, at least not in my book, which gave me the most exquisite sensations, not from their excellence, but by recalling ideas, and interesting ones too, that have been, I may say, forgotten ever since my arrival in America. I have also collected all my productions since '94; these I intend to polish and improve occasionally, and to add to them all those contained in my last edition which I think meritorious, and to copy the whole when corrected to my mind in one volume. I have an irresistible desire, which seems to come from inspiration alone, to attempt some Scots pastorals descriptive of the customs and rural manners of our native country, interspersed with scenes of humour, love, and tenderness. In Burns, Ferguson, Ramsay, and all our Scottish songs, these are the charms that captivate every heart. I believe a Scotsman better fitted for descriptions of rural scenes than those of any other nation on earth. His country affords the most picturesque and striking scenery; his heart and imagination warm and animated, strong and rapid in its conceptions, its attachments, and even prejudices, his taste is highly improved by the numberless pathetic ballads and songs handed down from generation to generation. There is not an ignorant ploughman in Scotland but who has a better taste and relish for a pastoral, particularly if interwoven with a love intrigue, than most of the pretended *literati* of America. Where is the country that has ever equalled Scotland in the genuine effusion of the pastoral muse, or where so many tears of joy, sympathy, and admiration have been shed by the humblest peasants over her bewitching strains? Had Thomson not possessed this ardent spirit of enthusiasm his Seasons would never have seen that immortality to which they are so justly entitled; but he was a Scotsman and glow'd with all

their energy of enthusiasm while ranging o'er the beauties of nature. But both Thomson and Burns, Ramsay and Ferguson, with all who have yet followed them, have left a thousand themes unsung, equally interesting with the best of their descriptions, a thousand pictures of rustic felicity that will yet be pourtrayed by the striking pencil of some future genius. My heart swells, my soul rises to an elevation I cannot express, to think I may yet produce some of these glowing wilds of rural scenery—some new Paties, Rogers, Glauds, and Simons, that will rank with these favourites of my country when their author has mixed with his kindred clay; that my name will be familiar in farms and cottages, in circles of taste and at scenes of merriment five hundred years hence, when the statues of bloody ambition are mouldered and forgotten. By heavens! the idea is transporting, and such a recompense is worth all the misfortunes, penury, and deprivations here that the most wretched sons of science have ever suffered. But I beg pardon for occupying so much of your time. Come out on Saturday or Sunday morning. Leave that cursed town at least one day. It is the most striking emblem of purgatory, at least to me, that exists. No poor soul is happier to escape from Bridewell than I to smell the fresh air and gaze over the green fields after a day or two's residence in Philadelphia, were it not attended by the regret of parting from my friend, whose obliged and unalterable brother I am while

ALEX. WILSON.

## † LETTER XXX.

Home news—Scotland in a 'dismal' state, 1800—sorry 'accommodations are so few'—yellow fever prevalent—dissuades from a journey 'next Spring'—farming—a visit promised—education of the children—make 'home' comfortable—intention and wishes of relatives in Scotland—the future hopeful.

*To Mr. WILLIAM DUNCAN.*

Gray's Ferry, October 30, 1802.

DEAR BILLY,

I was favoured with your despatches a few hours ago, through the kindness of Colonel Sullivan, who called on me for that purpose. I have read and re-read, over and over again, their contents; and shall devote the remainder of this evening, to reply to you, and the rest of the family, now joint tenants of the woods. By the arrival of John F. here, in August last, I received one letter from my brother David, one from Thomas W. and one for Alexander from David Wilson; and last week another packet arrived from Belfast, containing one letter from your father to myself; and to your mother, brother and brother-in-law, and yourself, one each, all of which I have herewith sent, and hope they may amuse a leisure hour. F. has been wofully disappointed in the expectations he had formed of his uncle. Instead of being able to assist him, he found him in the depth of poverty, and fast sinking under a severe fever. Probably the arrival of a relation contributed to his recovery; he is now able to crawl about. F. has had one child born and buried since his arrival. He weaves with Robertson, but neither likes the situation nor employment. He is a stout, active and ingenious fellow, can turn his hand to almost any thing, and wishes as eagerly to get up to the lakes as ever a saint longed to get to heaven. He gives a most dismal description of the situation of the poor people of Scotland in 1800.

Your letters, so long expected, have at length relieved me from much anxiety. I am very sorry that your accommodations are



so few, for my sister's sake, and the children's ; a fire-place and comfortable house for the winter must, if possible, be got up without delay. If masons are not to be had, I would attempt to raise a temporary one myself, I mean a fire-place—but surely they may be had, and lime and stones are also attainable by dint of industry. These observations are made not from any doubts of your doing every thing in your power to make your mother as comfortable as possible, and as your means will enable you, but from a solicitude for a sister's health, who has sustained more distress than usual. I know the rude appearance of the country, and the want of many usual conveniences, will for some time affect her spirits ; let it be your pleasure and study to banish these melancholy moments from her as much as possible. Whatever inconveniences they may for a while experience, it was well they left this devoted city. The fever, that yellow genius of destruction, has sent many poor mortals to their long homes since you departed ; and the gentleman who officiates as steward to the Hospital informed me yesterday evening that it rages worse this week than at any former period this season, though the physicians have ceased reporting. Every kind of business has been at a stand these three months, but the business of death.

You intimate your design of coming down next Spring. Alexander seems to have the same intention. How this will be done, consistent with providing for the family, is not so clear to me. Let me give my counsel on the subject. You will see by your father's letters that he cannot be expected before next July, or August perhaps, a time when you must of necessity be at home. Your coming down, considering loss of time and expenses, and calculating what you might do on the farm, or at the loom, or at other jobs, would not clear you more than twenty dollars difference, unless you intended to remain here five or six months, in which time much might be done by you and Alexander on the place. I am sorry he has been so soon discouraged with farming. Were my strength but equal to my spirit, I would abandon my school for ever for such an employment. Habit will reconcile him to all difficulties. It is more healthy, more independent and agreeable, than to be cooped up in a subterraneous dungeon, surrounded by



gloomy damp, and breathing an unwholesome air from morning to night, shut out from Nature's fairest scenes and the pure air of heaven. When necessity demands such a seclusion, it is noble to obey; but when we are left to choice, who would bury themselves alive? It is only in Winter that I would recommend the loom to both of you. In the month of March next I shall, if well, be able to command two hundred dollars cash *once more*. Nothing stands between me and this but health, and that I hope will continue at least till then. You may then direct as to the disposal of this money—I shall freely and cheerfully yield the whole to your management. Another quarter will enable me to settle John M.'s account, about the time it will be due; and, instead of wandering in search of employment five or six hundred miles for a few dollars, I would beg of you both to unite in putting the place and house in as good order as possible. But Alexander can get nothing but wheat and butter for this *haggling* and *slashing*! Never mind, my dear namesake, put up awhile with the rough fare and rough clothing of the country. Let us only get the place in good order, and you shall be no loser by it. Next Summer I will assuredly come up along with your father and George, if he comes as I expect he will, and every thing shall flourish.

My dear friend and nephew, I wish you could find a leisure hour in the evening to give the children, particularly Mary, some instruction in reading, and Alexander in writing and accounts. Don't be discouraged though they make but slow progress in both, but persevere a little every evening. I think you can hardly employ an hour at night to better purpose. And make James read every convenient opportunity. If I live to come up beside you, I shall take that burden off your shoulders. Be the constant friend and counsellor of your little colony, to assist them in their difficulties, encourage them in their despondencies, to make them as happy as circumstances will enable you. A mother, brothers, and sisters, in a foreign country, looking up to you as their best friend and supporter, places you in a dignified point of view. The future remembrance of your kind duty to them now, will, in the hour of your own distress, be as a healing angel of peace to your mind. Do every thing possible to make your house comfortable—

fortify the garrison in every point—stop every crevice that may let in that chilling devil, the roaring blustering northwest—heap up fires big enough for an Indian war-feast—keep the flour-barrel full—bake loaves like Hamles' Head\*—make the loom thunder, and the pot boil; and your snug little cabin re-echo nothing but sounds of domestic felicity. I will write you the moment I hear of George. I shall do every thing I have said to you, and never lose sight of the eighteenth of March; for which I shall keep night-school this Winter, and retain every farthing but what necessity requires—depend upon me. These are the outlines of *my* plan. If health stand it, all will be well; if not, we cannot help it. Ruminates on all this, and consult together. If you still think of coming down, I hope you would not hesitate for a moment to make my neighbourhood your home. If you come I shall be happy to have you once more beside me. If you resolve to stay on the farm, and put things in order as far as possible, I will think you have done what you thought best. But I forget that my paper is done.

Robb, Orr, &c., have escaped as yet from the pestilence; but Robb's three children have all had the ague. Rabby Rowan has gone to *Davie's Locker* at last: he died in the West Indies. My brother David talks of coming to America, and my father, poor old man, would be happy to be with you, rough and uncomfortable as your situation at present is. As soon as I finish this, I shall write to your mother and Alexander. There is a letter for John M., which he is requested to answer by his father-in-law. I hope John will set a firm resolute heart to the undertaking, and plant a posterity in that rich, western country, to perpetuate his name for ever. Thousands here would rejoice to be in his situation. How happy may you live thus united together in a free and plentiful country, after so many years of painful separation, where the bare necessaries of life were all that incessant drudgery could procure, and even that but barely. Should even sickness visit

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\* The name of a rock which stood in the river Cart near Wilson's birth-place in Seedhills, Paisley.—G.

you, which God forbid, each of you is surrounded by almost all the friends in the world, to nurse you, and pity and console you ; and surely it is not the least sad comfort of a deathbed, to be attended by affectionate relatives. Write me positively by post, two or three times. My best love to my sister, to Isabella, Alexander, John, the two Maries, James, Jenny, little Annie. God Almighty bless you all.

Your ever affectionate Friend,

ALEX. WILSON.

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† LETTER XXXI.

In good spirits—'no place without inconveniences'- 'don't despise *hagging* down trees'—farming—health—weave in Winter, &c.

To Mr. ALEXANDER DUNCAN.

October 31, 1802.

DEAR ALEXANDER,

I have laughed on every perusal of your letter. I have now deciphered the whole, except the blots, but I fancy they are only by the way of *half mourning* for your doleful captivity in the backwoods, where there is nothing but wheat and butter, eggs and gammon, for *hagging* down trees. Deplorable ! what must be done ? It is a good place, you say, for a man who has a parcel of *weans* ! . . .

But forgive this joking. I thank you, most heartily, for this your *first letter* to me ; and I hope you will follow it up with many more. I shall always reply to them with real pleasure. I am glad that your chief objection to the country is want of money. No place is without its inconveniences. Want of the necessaries of life would be a much greater grievance. If you can, in your present situation, procure sufficient of these, though attended with particular disadvantages, I would recommend you to persevere where you are. I would wish you and William to give your joint labours to putting the place in as good order as possible. A farm

of such land, in good cultivation, is highly valuable. It will repay all the labour bestowed upon it a hundred-fold ; and contains within it all the powers of plenty and independence. These it only requires industry to bring forth, and a small stock of money to begin with. The money I doubt not of being able to procure, next Summer, for a year or two, on interest, independent of two hundred dollars of my own, which I hope to possess on or before the middle of March next. C. S. is very much attached to both your brother and me ; and has the means in his power to assist us— and I know he will. In the meantime, if you and William unite in the undertaking, I promise you, as far as I am concerned, to make it the best plan you could pursue.

Accustom yourself, as much as you can, to working out. Don't despise *hayging* down trees. It is hard work, no doubt ; but taken moderately, it strengthens the whole sinews, and is a manly and independent employment. An old weaver is a poor, emaciated, helpless being, shivering over rotten yarn, and groaning over his empty flour barrel. An old farmer sits in his arm chair before his jolly fire, while his joists are crowded with hung beef and gammons, and the bounties of Heaven are pouring into his barns. Even the article of health is a consideration sufficient to make a young man prefer the labours of the field : for health is certainly the first enjoyment of human life. But perhaps weaving holds out advantages that farming does not. Then blend the two together ; weave in the depth of Winter, and work out the rest of the year. We will have it in our power, before next Winter, to have a shop, looms, &c., provided. Consider all I have said, and if I have a wrong view of the subject, form your own plans, and write me without delay. . . .

## † LETTER XXXII.

Unexpected visitors—better circumstances—Robert Burns and the ‘muse’—  
advices for the children, &c.

To Mr. WILLIAM DUNCAN.

Gray’s Ferry, December 23, 1802.

. . . The two Mr. Purdies popped into my school, this afternoon, as unexpected as they were welcome, with news from the promised land. I shall detain them with me all night, on purpose to have an opportunity of writing you a few lines. I am glad you are all well. I hope that this is the last devilish slough of despond which you will have to struggle in for some time. I will do all that I said to you, in my last, by the middle of March; so let care and sorrow be forgotten; and industry, hope, good-humour and economy, be your bosom friends.

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I succeed tolerably well; and seem to gain in the esteem of the people about. I am glad of it, because I hope it will put it in my power to clear the road a little before you, and banish despondency from the heart of my dearest friend. Be assured that I will ever as cheerfully contribute to your relief in difficulties, as I will rejoice with you in prosperity. But we have nothing to fear. One hundred bushels of wheat, to be sure, is no great marketing; but has it not been expended in the support of a mother, and infant brothers and sisters, thrown upon your bounty in a foreign country? Robert Burns, when the mice nibbled away his corn, said:

“I’ll get a blessin’ wi’ the lave,  
And never miss’t.”

Where he expected one, you may a thousand. Robin, by his own confession, ploughed up his mice out of *ha’ and hame*. You have built for your little wanderers a *cozie bield*, where none dare molest them. There is more true greatness in the affectionate exertions which you have made for their subsistence and support, than the bloody catalogue of heroes can boast of. Your own heart will speak peace and satisfaction to you, to the last moment of your

life, for every anxiety you felt on their account. Colonel Sullivan talks with pride and affection of you.

I wish Alexander had written me a few lines of the old German text. I laugh every time I look at his last letter : its a perfect antidote against the spleen. Well, Alexander, which is the best *fun*, handling the shuttle, or the ax? When John M. comes down, write me largely. And, dear sister, let me hear from you also. \* \*

I would beg leave to suggest to you the propriety of teaching the children to behave with good manners, and dutiful respect to yourself, each other, and every body.

You must excuse me for any thing I may have said amiss, or any thing I may have omitted to mention.

I am, with sincere attachment,

Your affectionate Friend,

ALEX. WILSON.

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+ LETTER XXXIII.

Various and arduous occupations as a teacher.

To Mr. THOMAS CRICHTON.

1st June, 1803.

. . . Close application to the duties of my profession, which I have followed since November, 1795, has deeply injured my constitution, the more so that my rambling disposition was the worst calculated of anyone's in the world for the austere regularity of a teacher's life. I have had many pursuits since I left Scotland—Mathematics, the German Language, Music, Drawing, &c., and I am now about to make a collection of all our finest birds.

## † LETTER XXXIV.

Flower-drawings—professional avocations hinder more progress.

To Mr. WILLIAM BARTRAM.

November 20, 1803.

I have attempted two of those prints which Miss Nancy\* so obligingly, and with so much honour to her own taste, selected for me. I was quite delighted with the anemone, but fear I have made but bungling work of it. Such as they are I send them for your inspection and opinion; neither of them is quite finished. For your kind advice towards my improvement, I return my most grateful acknowledgments.

The duties of my profession will not admit me to apply to this study with the assiduity and perseverance I could wish. Chief part of what I do is sketched by candle-light; and for this I am obliged to sacrifice the pleasures of social life, and the agreeable moments which I might enjoy in company with you and your amiable friend. I shall finish the other some time this week; and shall be happy if what I have done merit your approbation.

## † LETTER XXXV.

\* Pedagoguings'—'earnestly bent on pursuing my plan of making a collection of all the birds in this part of North America'—Quixotic, but to be done.

To Mr. ALEXANDER LAWSON.

March 12, 1804.

. . . I dare say you begin to think me very ungenerous and unfriendly in not seeing you for so long a time. I will simply state the cause, and I know you will excuse me. Six days in one week I have no more time than just to swallow my meals, and return

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\* Mr. Wm. Bartram's niece, who married Col. Carr.—G.



to my *Sanctum Sanctorum*. Five days of the following week are occupied in the same routine of *pedagoguing* matters; and the other two are sacrificed to that itch for drawing, which I caught from your honourable self. I never was more wishful to spend an afternoon with you. In three weeks I shall have a few days' vacancy, and mean to be in town chief part of the time. I am most earnestly bent on pursuing my plan of making a collection of all the birds in this part of North America. Now I don't want you to throw cold water, as Shakspeare says, on this notion, Quixotic as it may appear. I have been so long accustomed to the building of airy castles and brain windmills, that it has become one of my earthly comforts, a sort of a rough bone, that amuses me when sated with the dull drudgery of life.

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† LETTER XXXVI.

Sympathy—'hurry of a crowded school'—'attempts at some of our indigenous birds'—collection of 'native birds' enlarged—Nature.

To Mr. WILLIAM BARTRAM.

March 29, 1804.

. . . Three months have passed away since I had the pleasure of seeing you; and three dark and heavy months they have been to your family. My heart has shared in your distress, and sincerely sympathises with you for the loss you have sustained. But Time, the great curer of every grief, will gradually heal those wounds Misfortune has inflicted; and many years of tranquillity and happiness are, I sincerely hope, reserved for you.

I have been prevented from seeing you so long by the hurry of a crowded school, which occupied all my hours of daylight, and frequently half the others. The next quarter will leave me time enough; and, as there is no man living in whose company I have more real satisfaction, I hope you will pardon me if I now and then steal a little of your leisure.

I send for your amusement a few attempts at some of our indigenous birds, hoping that your good nature will excuse their deficiencies, while you point them out to me. I intended to be the bearer of them myself, but having so many little accounts to draw up before to-morrow, I am compelled to plead this as my excuse. I am almost ashamed to send you these drawings; but I knew your generous disposition will induce you to encourage one in whom you perceive a sincere and eager wish to do well. They were chiefly coloured by candle-light.

I have now got my collection of native birds considerably enlarged; and shall endeavour, if possible, to obtain all the smaller ones this summer. Be pleased to mark on the drawings, with a pencil, the names of each bird, as, except three or four, I do not know them. I shall be extremely obliged to you for every hint that will assist me in this agreeable amusement.

I am very anxious to see the performances of your fair pupil; and beg you would assure her from me that any of the birds I have are heartily at her service. Surely Nature is preferable, to copy after, to the works of the best masters, though perhaps more difficult; for I declare that the face of an owl, and the back of a lark, have put me to a nonplus; and if Miss Nancy will be so obliging as to try her hand on the last mentioned, I will furnish her with one in good order, and will copy her drawing with the greatest pleasure; having spent almost a week on two different ones, and afterwards destroyed them both, and got nearly in the slough of despond. . . . .

## † LETTER XXXVII.

Renewed thanks—afflictions of the good—'pencil of Nature'—'schemes of speculation' of others—himself 'entranced' over the plumage of a lark, &c.—odd and varied 'specimens' sent him—pathetic notice of a mouse.

*To the Same.*

Kingsessing, March 31, 1804.

. . . . . I take the first few moments I have had since receiving your letter, to thank you for your obliging attention to my little attempts at drawing; and for the very affectionate expressions of esteem with which you honour me. But sorry I am, indeed, that afflictions so severe, as those you mention, should fall where so much worth and sensibility reside, while the profligate, the unthinking and unfeeling, so frequently pass through life, strangers to sickness, adversity, or suffering. But God visits those with distress whose enjoyments He wishes to render more exquisite. The storms of affliction do not last for ever; and sweet is the serene air, and warm sunshine, after a day of darkness and tempest. Our friend has, indeed, passed away, in the bloom of youth and expectation; but nothing has happened but what almost every day's experience teaches us to expect. How many millions of beautiful flowers have flourished and faded under your eye; and how often has the whole profusion of blossoms, the hopes of a whole year, been blasted by an untimely frost. He has gone only a little before us; we must soon follow; but while the feelings of nature cannot be repressed, it is our duty to bow with humble resignation to the decisions of the great Father of all, rather receiving with gratitude the blessings He is pleased to bestow, than repining at the loss he thinks proper to take from us. But allow me, my dear friend, to withdraw your thoughts from so melancholy a subject, since the best way to avoid the force of any overpowering passion, is to turn its direction another way.

That lovely season is now approaching, when the garden, woods and fields, will again display their foliage and flowers.

Every day we may expect strangers, flocking from the south, to fill our woods with harmony. The pencil of Nature is now at work, and outlines, tints, and gradations of lights and shades, that baffle all description, will soon be spread before us by that great Master, our most benevolent Friend and Father. Let us cheerfully participate in the feast he is preparing for all our senses. Let us survey those millions of green strangers, just peeping into day, as so many happy messengers come to proclaim the power and munificence of the Creator. I confess that I was always an enthusiast in my admiration of the rural scenery of Nature ; but, since your example and encouragement have set me to attempt to imitate her productions, I see new beauties in every bird, plant, or flower, I contemplate ; and find my ideas of the incomprehensible First Cause still more exalted, the more minutely I examine His work.

I sometimes smile to think that while others are immersed in deep schemes of speculation and aggrandizement—in building towns and purchasing plantations, I am entranced in contemplation over the plumage of a lark, or gazing like a despairing lover, on the lineaments of an owl. While others are hoarding up their bags of money, without the power of enjoying it, I am collecting, without injuring my conscience, or wounding my peace of mind, those beautiful specimens of Nature's works that are for ever pleasing. I have had live crows, hawks, and owls—opossums, squirrels, snakes, lizards, &c., so that my room has sometimes reminded me of Noah's ark ; but Noah had a wife in one corner of it, and in this particular our parallel does not altogether tally. I receive every subject of natural history that is brought to me, and though they do not march into my ark from all quarters, as they did that of our great ancestor, yet I find means, by the distribution of a few five-penny *bits*, to make them find the way fast enough. A boy, not long ago, brought me a large basket full of crows. I expect his next load will be bull-frogs, if I don't soon issue orders to the contrary. One of my boys caught a mouse in school, a few days ago, and directly marched up to me with his prisoner. I set about drawing it that same evening, and all the while the pantings of its little heart showed it to be in the most

extreme agonies of fear. I had intended to kill it, in order to fix it in the claws of a stuffed owl, but happening to spill a few drops of water near where it was tied, it lapped it up with such eagerness and looked in my face with such an eye of supplicating terror, as perfectly overcame me. I immediately untied it, and restored it to life and liberty. The agonies of the prisoner at the stake, while the fire and instruments of torment are preparing, could not be more severe than the sufferings of that poor mouse; and, insignificant as the object was, I felt at that moment the sweet sensations that mercy leaves on the mind when she triumphs over cruelty.

My dear friend, you see I take the liberty of an old acquaintance with you, in thus trifling with your time. You have already raised me out of the slough of despond, by the hopes of your agreeable conversation, and that of your amiable pupil. Nobody, I am sure, rejoices more in her acquisition of the beautiful accomplishments of drawing than myself. I hope she will persevere. I am persuaded that any pains you bestow upon her will be rewarded beyond your expectations. Besides, it will be a new link in that chain of friendship and consanguinity by which you are already united; though I fear it will be a powerful addition to that attraction which was fully sufficient before, to make even a virtuoso quit his owls and opossums, and think of something else.

ALEXANDER WILSON.

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† LETTER XXXVIII.

'A few more imitations of birds'—even poetry neglected for this bewitching amusement—humming-birds and flowers.

*To the Same.*

May 1st, 1804.

. . . . . I send you a few more imitations of birds for your opinion, which I value beyond that of anybody else, though I am

seriously apprehensive that I am troublesome. These are the last I shall draw for some time, as the employment consumes every leisure moment, leaving nothing for friendship, or those rural recreations which I so much delight in. Even poetry, whose heavenly enthusiasm I used to glory in, can hardly ever find me at home, so much has this bewitching amusement engrossed all my senses.

Please to send me the names of the birds. I wish to draw a small flower, in order to represent the Humming-bird in the act of feeding : will you be so good as to send me one suitable, and not too large ? The legs and feet of some are unfinished ; they are all miserably imperfect, but your generous candour I know to be beyond all their defects.

ALEXANDER WILSON.

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† LETTER XXXIX.

'Our little journey'—put off the 'jaunt'—verses.

*To the Same,*

June, 15th and 16th, 1804.

I have arranged my business for our little journey ; and, if to-morrow be fair, I shall have the chaise ready for you at any time in the morning, say seven o'clock. Or if you think any other hour more suitable, please to let me know by the bearer, and I shall make it answerable to me.

I believe we had better put off our intended jaunt until some more auspicious day.

Clouds, from Eastern regions driven,  
Still obscure the gloomy skies ;  
Let us yield, since angry Heaven  
Frowns upon our enterprise.

Haply some unseen disaster  
Hung impending o'er our way ;  
Which our kind Almighty Master  
Saw, and sought us thus to stay.

By and by, when fair Aurora  
 Bids the drowsy fogs to fly,  
 And the glorious god of Flora  
 Rises in a cloudless sky ;  
 Then, in whirling chariot seated,  
 With my friend I'll gladly go :  
 With his converse richly treated—  
 Happy to be honoured so.

ALEX. WILSON.

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† LETTER XL.

'The Solitary Tutor' sent to the 'Literary Magazine.'

To Mr. Alexander Lawson.

August 14th, 1804.

DEAR SIR,

Enclosed is a copy of the "Solitary Tutor," which I should like to see in the "Literary Magazine" of this month, along with the other poem which I sent the editor last week. Wishing, for my future benefit, to call the public attention to these pieces, if, in the editor's opinion, they should seem worthy of it, I must request the favour of you to converse with him on this subject. You know the numerous pieces I am in possession of, would put it in my power to support tolerably well any recommendation he might bestow on these; and while they would not, I trust, disgrace the pages of his valuable publication, they might serve as my introduction to the literary world, and as a sort of inspiration to some future and more finished attempts. Knowing that you will freely pardon the *quantum* of vanity that suggests these hints.

I remain, with real regard, &c.,

ALEXANDER WILSON.



## † LETTER XLI.

Pinkerton's geography—criticisms of—'only thirty-four pages allotted to the whole United States'—'miserably disappointed' by the 'account of the natural history'—absurdities about 'pork' and 'eels'—Scotland.

To Mr. William Bartram,  
Union School, September 17, 1804.

. . . . . The second volume of Pinkerton's Geography has at length made its appearance; and I take the freedom of transmitting it, and the Atlas, for your amusement. To condemn so extensive a work before a re-perusal, or without taking into consideration all the difficulties that were to be surmounted, is, perhaps, not altogether fair. Yet we almost always form our judgment from the first impressions, and this judgment is very seldom relinquished. You will, therefore, excuse me if I give you some of the impressions made on myself by a cursory perusal.

Taking it *all in all*, it is certainly the best treatise on the subject hitherto published; though had the author extended his plan, and, instead of two, given us four volumes, it would not frequently have laid him under the necessity of disappointing his reader by the bare mention of things that required greater illustration; and of compressing the natural history of whole regions into half a page. Only *thirty-four* pages allotted to the whole United States! This is brevity with a vengeance. I had indeed expected from the exertions of Dr. Barton, as complete an account of the natural history of this part of the world as his means of information, and the limits of the work, would admit. I have been miserably disappointed; and you will pardon me when I say that his omitting entirely the least reference to your researches in Botany and Zoology, and seeming so solicitous to let us know of his own productions, bespeak a narrowness of mind, and self-consequence, which are truly despicable. Every one acquainted with you both, would have confidently trusted that he would rejoice in the opportunity of making the world better acquainted with a man whose works show such a minute and in-

timate knowledge of these subjects ; and from whom he had received so much information. But no—not even the slightest allusion, lest posterity might discover that there existed, at this time, in the United States, a Naturalist of information superior to his. My dear sir, I am a Scotchman, and don't love my friends with that cold selfish prudence which I see in some ; and if I offend in thus speaking from the fulness of my heart, I know you will forgive me.

Pinkerton' has, indeed, furnished us with many curious particulars unknown, or, at least, unnoticed, by all former geographers ; and also with other items long since exploded as fabulous and ridiculous ; such is his account of the Upas or poisonous tree ; and of children having been lost in some of our American swamps, and of being seen many years afterwards, in a wild savage state ! But he very gravely tells his readers that the people of Scotland eat little or no pork from a prejudice which they entertain against swine, the Devil having taken possession of some of them two thousand years ago ! What an enlightened people these Scots must be ; and what a delicate taste they must be possessed of ! Yet I have traversed nearly three-fourths of that country, and mixed much with the common people, and never heard of such an objection before. Had the learned author told his readers that, until late years, Scotland, though abounding in rich pastures, even to its mountain tops, was yet but poorly productive in grain, fruit, &c., the usual food of hogs, and that on this account innumerable herds of sheep, horses, and cattle, were raised, and but very little pork, he would then have stated the simple facts ; and not subjected himself to the laughter of every native of that part of Britain.

As to the pretended antipathy of the Scots to eels, because they resemble snakes, it is equally ridiculous and improbable ; ninety-nine out of a hundred of the natives never saw a snake in their lives. The fact is, it is as usual to eat eels in Scotland, where they can be got, as it is in America ; and although I have frequently heard such objections made to the eating of eels here, where snakes are so common, yet I do not remember to have heard the comparison made in Scotland. I have taken notice of

these two observations of his, because they are applied generally to the Scots, making them appear a weak squeamish-stomached set of beings, infected with all the prejudices and antipathies of children.

These are some of my objections to this work, which, however, in other respects, does honour to the talents, learning, and industry of the compiler. . . . .

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† LETTER XLII.

'Snug at home' and the retrospect of journeyings not pleasant, yet ready to 'commence a more extensive expedition'—no ties to hinder—deficiencies.

To Mr. William Bartram.

Gray's Ferry, December 15, 1804.

Though now snug at home, looking back in recollection on the long, circuitous, journey which I have at length finished, through deep snows, and almost uninhabited forests; over stupendous mountains, and down dangerous rivers; passing over, in a course of thirteen hundred miles, as great a variety of men and modes of living, as the same extent of country can exhibit in any part of the United States—though in this tour I have had every disadvantage of deep roads and rough weather; hurried marches, and many other inconveniences to encounter,—yet so far am I from being satisfied with what I have seen, or discouraged by the fatigues which every traveller must submit to, that I feel more eager than ever to commence some more extensive expedition; where scenes and subjects entirely new, and generally unknown, might reward my curiosity; and where perhaps my humble acquisitions might add something to the stores of knowledge. For all the hazards and privations incident to such an undertaking, I feel confident in my own spirit and resolution. With no family to enchain my affections, no ties but those of friendship, and the most ardent love of my adopted country; with a constitution which hardens amidst fatigues, and a disposition sociable and open, which can find itself at home by an Indian fire in the depth of the woods, as well as in the

best apartment of the civilised [world], I have at present a real design of becoming a traveller. But I am miserably deficient in many acquirements absolutely necessary for such a character. Botany, Mineralogy, and Drawing, I most ardently wish to be instructed in, and with these I should fear nothing. Can I yet make any progress in Botany, sufficient to enable me to be useful, and what would be the most proper way to proceed? I have many leisure moments that should be devoted to this pursuit, provided I could have hopes of succeeding. Your opinion on this subject will confer an additional obligation on your affectionate friend. . . .

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† LETTER XLIII.

The school—recent 'journeys'—among the 'coffee-coloured' tribes—a 'new' bird—'mud holes' and darkness—'boots' reduced 'to legs and upper leathers.'

*To Mr. WM. DUNCAN.*

Gray's Ferry, Dec. 24th, 1804.

. . . You have no doubt looked for this letter long ago, but I wanted to see how matters would finally settle with respect to my school before I wrote; they remain, however, as uncertain as before; and this quarter will do little more than defray my board and firewood. Comfortable intelligence truly, methinks I hear you say; but no matter. . . .

I shall begin where you and I left off our story, viz., at Aurora, on the shores of the Cayuga. The evening of that day, Isaac and I lodged at the outlet of Owasco Lake, on the turnpike, seven or eight miles from Cayuga bridge; we waded into the stream, washed our boots and pantaloons, and walked up to a contemptible dram-shop, where, taking possession of one side of the fire we sat, deafened with the noise and hubbub of a parcel of drunk tradesmen. At five next morning we started; it had frozen, and the road was in many places deep and slippery. I insensibly got into a hard step of walking; Isaaok kept groaning a rod or so behind, though I carried his gun. . . . We set off

again, and we stopped at the outlet of Skaneateles Lake, ate some pork-blubber and bread, and departed. At about two in the afternoon we passed Onondaga Hollow, and lodged in Manlius Square, a village of thirty houses, that have risen like mushrooms in two or three years, having walked this day thirty-four miles. On the morning of the 22d we started as usual by five—road rough—and Isaac grunting and lagging behind. This day we were joined by another young traveller, returning home to his father's on the Mohawk ; he had a pocket bottle, and made frequent and long applications of it to his lips. The road this day bad, and the snow deeper than before. Passing through Oneida Castle, I visited every house within three hundred yards of the road, and chatted to the copper-coloured tribe. In the evening we lodged at Lard's tavern, within eleven miles of Utica, the roads deplorably bad, and Isaac and his disconsolate companion groaning at every step behind me, so that, as drummers do in battle, I was frequently obliged to keep before, and sing some lively ditty, to drown the sound of their "ohs !" and "ahs !" and "O Lords !" The road for fifteen or twenty miles was knee deep of mud. We entered Utica at nine the next morning. This place is three times larger than it was four years ago ; and from Oneida to Utica is almost an entire continued village. This evening we lodged on the east side of the Mohawk, fifteen miles below Utica, near which I shot a bird of the size of a Mocking-bird, which proves to be one never yet described by naturalists. I have it here in excellent order. From the town called Herkimer we set off through deep mud and some snow ; and about mid-day, between East and West Canada Creeks, I shot three birds of the Jay kind, all of one species, which appears to be undescribed. Mr. Bartram is greatly pleased at the discovery ; and I have saved two of them in tolerable condition. Below the Little Falls the road was excessively bad, and Isaac was almost in despair, in spite of all I could do to encourage him. We walked this day twenty-four miles ; and early on the 25th started off again through deep mud, till we came within fifteen miles of Schenectady, when a boat coming down the river, Isaac expressed a wish to get on board. I walked six miles afterwards by myself,

till it got so dark that I could hardly rescue myself from the mud-holes. The next morning I entered Schenectady, but Isaac did not arrive in the boat till noon. Here we took the stage-coach for Albany, the roads being excessively bad, and arrived there in the evening. After spending two days in Albany, we departed in a sloop, and reached New York on Saturday, at noon, the first of December. My boots were now reduced to legs and upper leathers, and my pantaloons in a sad plight. Twelve dollars were expended on these two articles. . . .

On Friday, the 7th December, I reached Gray's Ferry, having walked forty-seven miles that day. I was absent two months on this journey, and I traversed in that time upwards of twelve hundred miles.

The evening of my arrival I went to L—h's, whose wife had got twins, a boy and a girl. The boy was called after me; this honour took six dollars more from me. After paying for a cord of wood, I was left with only *three-quarters* of a dollar. . . .

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#### LETTER XLIV.

Dr. Barton—Niagara—'American crow'—Bartram, senr.—Choctaw bonepickers.

To Mr. WM. BARTRAM,  
Union School, Dec. 24, 1804.

. . . I have perused Dr. Barton's publication,\* and return it with many thanks for the agreeable and unexpected treat it has afforded me. The description of the Falls of Niagara is, in some places a faint, though just, delineation of that stupendous cataract. But many interesting particulars are omitted; and much of the writer's reasoning on the improbability of the *wearing away* of the precipice, and consequent recession of the Falls, seems contradicted by every appearance there; and many other assertions are incorrect. Yet on such a subject, everything, however trifling, seems to attract attention: the reader's imagination supplying him with scenery in abundance, even amidst the feebleness and barrenness of the meanest writer's description.

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\* The Philadelphia Medical and Physical Journal, vol. 1.



After this article, I was most agreeably amused with "Anecdotes of an American Crow," written in such a pleasing style of playful humour as I have seldom seen surpassed, and forming a perfect antidote against the spleen; abounding at the same time with observations and reflections not unworthy of a philosopher.

The sketch of your father's life, with the extracts from his letters, I read with much pleasure. They will remain lasting monuments of the worth and respectability of the father, as well as of the filial affection of the son.

The description of the Choctaw *Bonepickers* is a picture so horrible, that I think nothing can exceed it. Many other pieces in this work are new and interesting. It cannot fail to promote the knowledge of natural history, and deserves on this account every support and encouragement. . . . .

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#### LETTER XLV.

The 'Literary Magazine'—Falls of Niagara—'many large rocks that used formerly to appear . . . . now swept away.'

*To the Same,*

Dec. 26, 1804.

. . . I send for your amusement the "Literary Magazine" for September, in which you will find a well written, and, except in a few places, a correct description of the great Falls of Niagara. I yesterday saw a drawing of them, taken in 1768, and observe that many large rocks, that used formerly to appear in the rapids above the Horseshoe falls, are now swept away; and the form of the curve considerably altered, the consequence of its gradual retrogression. I hope this account will entertain you, as I think it by far the most complete I have yet seen. . . . .



## LETTER XLVI.

A former letter unposted—hard struggles—' families . . . in a state of starvation'—' The Foresters' much enlarged.

To Mr. WM. DUNCAN.  
Kingsessing, February 20, 1805.

. . . . I received yours of January 1, and wrote immediately ; but partly through negligence, and partly through accident, it has not been put into the post-office ; and I now sit down to give you some additional particulars. . . . .

. . . . This winter has been entirely lost to me, as well as to yourself. I shall on the twelfth of next month be scarcely able to collect a sufficiency to pay my board, having not more than twenty-seven scholars. Five or six families, who used to send me their children, have been almost in a state of starvation. The rivers Schuylkill and Delaware are still shut, and waggons are passing and repassing at this moment upon the ice.

The solitary hours of this winter I have employed in completing the poem which I originally intended for a description of our first journey to Ovid. It is now so altered as to bear little resemblance to the original ; and I have named it the *Foresters*. It begins with a description of the Fall or Indian Summer, and relates minutely our peregrinations and adventures until our arrival at Catherine Landing, occupying ten hundred and thirty lines. The remainder will occupy nearly as much ; and as I shall, if ever I publish it, insert numerous notes, I should be glad if, while you are on the spot, you would collect every interesting anecdote you can of the country, and of the places which we passed through. Hunting stories, &c., peculiar to the [Indians] would be acceptable. I should be extremely glad to spend one afternoon with you for the benefit of your criticisms. I lent the poem to Mr. ———, our senator, who seems to think it worth reading ; and ——— has expressed many flattering compliments on my labours ;

but I don't value either of their opinions half as much as I would yours. I have bestowed more pains upon this than I ever did upon any former poem ; and if it contain nothing really good, I shall for every despair of producing any other that will. . . .

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† LETTER XLVII.

Re-election of Jefferson as President—high praise of—two birds from the Mohawk.

To Mr. WM. BARTRAM.

March 4, 1805.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

This day the heart of every Republican, of every good man within the immense limits of our happy country, will leap with joy.

The re-appointment and continuance of our beloved Jefferson to superintend our national concerns, is one of those distinguished blessings whose beneficent effects extend to posterity ; and whose value our hearts may feel, but can never express.

I congratulate with you, my dear friend, on this happy event. The enlightened philosopher,—the distinguished naturalist,—the *first statesman on earth*,—the friend, the ornament of science, is the father of our country, the faithful guardian of our liberties. May the precious fruits of such pre-eminent talents long, long be ours ; and the grateful effusions of millions of freemen, at a far distant period, follow their aged and honoured patriot to the peaceful tomb.

I am at present engaged in drawing the two birds which I brought from the Mohawk ; and, if I can finish them to your approbation, I intend to transmit them to our excellent President, as the child of an amiable parent presents to its affectionate father some little token of its esteem. . . .

## † LETTER XLVIII.

Letters received and answered—not to ‘part with the place to disadvantage’—school ‘thin’—intended to leave, but a great effort made, so he remained—no tidings from Scotland—‘The Foresters’—the two ‘nondescript’ birds—letters to Jefferson—suffering ‘poor’ in Philadelphia—keep ‘a diary,’ and ‘remember me as you wander through your woody solitudes.’

*To Mr. WM. DUNCAN.*

Gray’s Ferry, March 26, 1805.

. . . . I received your letter of January 1, sometime about the beginning of February, and wrote the same evening very fully ; but have heard nothing in return. Col. S. desires me to tell you to be in no uneasiness, nor part with the place to a disadvantage on his account. His son has been with me since January. I told you in my last of the thinness of my school : it produced me the last quarter only twenty-six scholars ; and the sum of fifteen dollars was all the money I could raise from them at the end of the term. I immediately called the trustees together, and, stating the affair to them, proposed giving up the school. Two of them on the spot offered to subscribe between them one hundred dollars a-year rather than permit me to go ; and it was agreed to call a meeting of the people : the result was honourable to me, for forty-eight scholars were instantly subscribed for ; so that the ensuing six months my school will be worth pretty near two hundred dollars. So much for my affairs. . . .

I have never had a scrap from Scotland since last summer ; but I am much more anxious to hear from you. I hope you have weathered this terrible winter ; and that your heart and limbs are as sound as ever. I also most devoutly wish that matters could be managed so that we could be together. This farm must either be sold or let ; it must not for ever be a great gulf between us. I have spent most of my leisure hours this winter in writing the “Foresters,” a poem descriptive of our journey. I have brought it up only to my shooting expedition at the head of the Seneca Lake, and it amounts already to twelve hundred lines. I hope that when you and I meet, it will afford you more pleasure

than any of my productions has ever done. The two nondescript birds\* which I killed on the Mohawk, attracted the notice of several naturalists about Philadelphia. On the 4th of March, I set to work upon a large sheet of fine drawing paper, and in ten days I finished two faithful drawings of them, far superior to any that I had before. In the background, I represented a view of the Falls of Niagara, with the woods wrought in as finely as I possibly could do. Mr. Lawson was highly pleased with it, and Mr. Bartram was even more so. I then wrote a letter to that best of men, Mr. Jefferson, which Mr. Bartram enclosed in one of his, (both of which, at least copies of them, I shall show you when we meet,) and sent off the whole, carefully rolled up, by the mail on the 20th inst. to Monticello, in Virginia. The Jay I presented to Mr. Peale, at his request; and it is now in the Museum. I have done but few other drawings, being so intent on the poem. I hope if you find any curious birds, you will attempt to preserve them, or at least their skins; if a small bird be carefully skinned, it can easily be set up at any time. I still intend to complete my collection of drawings; but the last will be by far the best. . . .

The poor of Philadelphia have suffered extremely this winter, the river having been frozen up for more than two months, yet the ice went away without doing any damage. I must again request that you and Alexander would collect the skins of as many birds as you have not seen here. . . . The process of skinning the birds may amuse you; and your collections will be exceedingly agreeable to me. In the meantime, never lose sight of getting rid of the troublesome farm, if it can be done with advantage, so that we may once more be together; and write to me frequently.

I have now nothing more to say, but to give my affectionate compliments to your mother and all the family, and to wish you every comfort that the state of society you are in can afford. With the great volume of Nature before you, you can never, while in health, be without amusement. Keep a diary of every

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\* One of these birds was the Canada Jay (Am. Orn., vol. 3, p. 33, ed. 1st), which was known to naturalists.—*Ord.*

thing you meet with that is curious. Look out, now and then, for natural curiosities as you traverse your farm ; and remember me as you wander through your woody solitudes.

## ANSWER OF THE PRESIDENT.

From JEFFERSON.  
April 7, 1805.

SIR,

I received here yesterday your favour of March 18, with the elegant drawings of the new birds you found on your tour to Niagara, for which I pray you to accept my thanks. The Jay is quite unknown to me. From my observations while in Europe on the birds and quadrupeds of that quarter, I am of opinion there is not in our continent a single bird or quadruped which is not sufficiently unlike all the members of its family there to be considered as specifically different. On this general observation I conclude with confidence that your Jay is not a European bird.

The first bird on the same sheet I judge to be a *Muscicapa* from its bill, as well as from the following circumstance. Two or three days before my arrival here a neighbour killed a bird, unknown to him, and never before seen here, as far as he could learn. It was brought to me soon after I arrived, but in the dusk of the evening, and so putrid, that it could not be approached but with disgust. But I retain a sufficiently exact idea of its form and colours to be satisfied it is the same with yours. The only difference I find in yours is that the white on the back is not so pure, and that the one I saw had a little of a crest. Your figure, compared with the white-bellied *Gobe-mouche*, 8 Buff. 342, Pl. enlum. 566, shows a near relation. Buffon's is dark on the back.

As you are curious in birds, there is one well worthy your attention, to be found, or rather heard, in every part of America, and yet scarcely ever to be seen ; it is in all the forests from Spring to Fall, and never but on the tops of the tallest trees, from which it perpetually serenades us with some of the sweetest notes, and as clear as those of the nightingale. I have followed it for miles without ever, but once, getting a good view of it. It is of the size and make of the Mocking-bird, lightly thrush-coloured on the back, and a grayish-white on the breast and belly. Mr. Randolph, my son-in-law, was in possession of one which had been shot by a neighbour. He pronounces this also a *Muscicapa*, and I think it much resembling the *Moucheronelle de la Martinique*, 8 Buffon, 374, Pl. enlum. 568. As it abounds in all the neighbourhood of Philadelphia, you may perhaps by patience and perseverance (of which much will be requisite) get a sight, if not a possession, of it. I have for twenty years interested the young sportsmen of my neighbourhood to shoot me one: but as yet without success. Accept my salutations and assurances of respect.

TH. JEFFERSON.

## † LETTER XLIX.

Letter of President Jefferson—'jay, entirely new'—a 'very strange bird' to be looked for.

*To Mr. WILLIAM BARTRAM.*

April 18th, 1805.

. . . By Mr. Jefferson's condescending and very intelligent letter to me, which I enclose for your perusal, it appears that our Jay is an entirely new, or rather undescribed bird, which met me on the banks of the Mohawk, to do me the honour of ushering him to the world. This duty I have conscientiously discharged, by introducing him to two naturalists: the one endeared to me and every lover of science by the benevolence of his heart; and the other ordained by heaven to move in a distinguished orbit—an honour to the human race—the patron of science, and best hope of republicans! I say that no bird, since Noah's days, could boast of such distinguished honour.

Mr Jefferson speaks of a very strange bird. Please let we know what he is. I shall be on the look-out, and he must be a sly fellow if he escape me. I shall watch his motions and the sound of his serenade pretty closely, to be able to transmit to our worthy President a faithful sketch of a bird which he has been so long curious to possess. . . .

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 † LETTER L.

'The plantation increasing in value'—living as a 'mere hermit'—letter from Jefferson—a 'strange' bird is still sought for—'were I able I would undertake another journey.'

*To Mr. WM. DUNCAN.*

Gray's Ferry, May 8th, 1805.

I am glad to understand that the plantation is increasing so fast in value, but more so that it is not either sold or otherwise disposed of at the low rate at which we would have once thrown it



away ; yet it is the perpetual cause of separating us, which I am very sorry for. I am living a mere hermit, not spending one farthing, to see if I possibly can reimburse ——, who I can see is not so courteous and affable as formerly. I hope to be able to pay him one hundred dollars, with interest, next October, and the remainder in the Spring. We shall then be clear of the world, and I don't care how many privations I suffer to effect that. I associate with nobody ; spend my leisure hours in drawing, wandering through the woods, or playing upon the violin.

I informed you in my last of sending Mr. Jefferson drawings of the Falls, and some birds, which I found on the Mohawk, and which it seems have never been taken notice of by any naturalist. He returned me a very kind and agreeable letter, from Monticello, expressing many obligations for the drawings, which he was highly pleased with ; and describing to me a bird, which he is very desirous of possessing, having interested the young sportsmen of his neighbourhood, he says, these twenty years, to shoot him one, without success. It is of the size and make of the Mocking-bird, lightly thrush-coloured on the back, and grayish-white on the breast ; is never heard but from the tops of the tallest trees, whence it continually serenades us with some of the sweetest notes, and as clear as those of the nightingale. Mr. Bartram can give no account of this bird, except it be the Wood Robin, which I don't think it is ; for Mr. Jefferson says, "*it is scarcely ever to be seen ;*" and "I have followed it for miles without ever, but once, getting a good view of it." I have been on the look-out ever since, but in vain. If you can hear of such a bird, let me know. I wish you also to look for the new bird which I discovered. It is of the size of the Blue Jay ; and is of that genus—of a dull lead colour on the back—the forehead white—black on the back of the neck—the breast and belly a dirty, or brownish white, with a white ring round its neck—its legs and bill exactly the Jay's. Pray inquire respecting it, and any other new bird. If they could be conveyed to me, drawings of them, presented to the same dignified character, might open the road to a better acquaintance, and something better might follow. Alexander and you, will, I hope, be on the look-out with the gun, and kill every bird that comes in your way ; and



keep written descriptions, or the skins, if possible, of those you don't know. Were I able, I would undertake another journey up to you through the woods, while the birds are abundant ; and nothing would give me so much pleasure as to make another extensive tour with you for this purpose ; for I am persuaded that there are many species yet undescribed ; and Mr. Jefferson is anxious to replenish his museum with the rare productions of his country.

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LETTER LI.

'Finishing a Hanging-bird' when a welcome letter reached—a 'social crack'—the 'land business'—conduct approved—School and schooling—the President and his bird—the 'Foresters'—the 'Rural Walk' and the 'Solitary Tutor'—'cut a pretty ragged appearance'

*To the Same.*

Gray's Ferry, May 31, 1805.

Yesterday evening I was finishing a Hanging-bird in my silent mansion, musing upon a certain affair, when Mr. L. popped his head in at the window, with a letter. I instantly laid down my pencil, and enjoyed a social *crack* with my distant friend ; and was heartily and truly pleased with the upshot. In everything relative to this land business, you have acted amidst difficulties and discouragements with prudence and discretion. In refusing to engage with —— you acted well ; and I doubt not but you will be equally circumspect in making a transfer of the property, so that the Yankee will not be able, even if he were willing, to take you in. More than half of the rognery of one-half of mankind is owing to the simplicity of the other half. You have my hearty concurrence in the whole affair, for I impatiently wish you beside me, not only to enjoy your society and friendship, but to open to you the book of knowledge, and enable you, in your turn, to teach it to others. In plain language, I wish you to prosecute your studies with me a few months ; a school will soon be found, and you can then pursue them without expense, and I trust with pleasure. The business has indeed its cares, but affords leisure for many amusements ; and is decent and reputable when properly discharged. I am living in solitude ; spending nothing ; diligently

attending to the duties of the day ; and filling up every leisure moment with drawing and music. I have bought no clothes, nor shall I, this Summer ; therefore if you settle the matter with —— as you have agreed, we can discharge our obligations to ——, and be in a state to go on with your studies for at least six months. Mr. —— was here yesterday, and expressed many acknowledgments for the rapid progress —— is making, for indeed I have exerted myself to pay my obligations to the father by my attentions to the son.

I wrote you respecting the letter I had from the President. I have never been able to get a sight of the bird he mentions. I hope you will not neglect to bring your gun with you, and look out as you come along.

I have done no more to the *Foresters*. The journey is brought up to my expedition upon the Seneca Lake. I am much in want of notes of the first settlement, and present state, of the different places that we passed, as we went up the Susquehannah; every thing of this kind, with hunting anecdotes, &c., I wish you to collect on your way down. The remainder of the poem will, I hope, be superior to what is already written, the scenery and incidents being more interesting ; and will extend to at least another fifteen hundred lines, which will make in all about three thousand.\* The notes will swell it to a tolerable size.

The *Rural Walk*, which I published last summer in the *Literary Magazine* has been lately republished in the *Port Folio*†

\* After many inquiries, and unwearied research, it turned out that this invisible musician was no other than the Wood Robin, a bird which, if sought for in those places which it affects, may be seen every hour of the day. Its favourite haunts Wilson has beautifully described in its history ; but so far from being found always "on the tops of the tallest trees," it is seldom seen in such places, but seems to prefer the horizontal branches, at no great height, especially when piping its exquisitely melodious song. One of its names, the Ground Robin, is derived from the circumstance of its being frequently seen upon the ground. Its song consists of several distinct parts, at the conclusion of each of which it commonly flies a few feet, and rests just long enough to continue the strain. A person unacquainted with these particulars, would suppose that he heard several birds, in various quarters, responding to each other, and would find it hard to believe that the whole was the performance of one.—*Ord.*

† For April 27, 1805.—*Ord.*

with many commendations on its beauties. The *Solitary Tutor* met with much approbation. But I reserve my best efforts for the remainder of the *Foresters*. . . .

I have not mentioned anything of the sale of the land, nor shall I until the business is finally concluded. I shall expect to hear from you at least twice yet before you arrive ; and I hope you will make no unnecessary delay in returning. As you cut a pretty ragged appearance at present, and want something to laugh at, suppose you set your muse to work upon your tatterdemalian dishabille. The former neatness of your garb, contrasted with the present squalidness, would make a capital subject for a song, not forgetting the causes. But you are in the dress of the people you live among ; you are therefore in character. B. had a hat on when I was up in your quarter, the rim of which had been eaten off, close to his head, by the rats, or perhaps, cut off to make soles to his shoes ; yet it was so common as to escape observation. I saw another fellow, too, at the tavern, who had pieces cut out of his *behind*, like a swallow's tail. . . .

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† LETTER LII.

Good-wishes to Father—old age anticipated.

*To his Father.*

1st June, 1805.

. . . . I have nothing more to say but to wish you all the comforts that your great age, and respectable and industrious life, truly merit. In my conduct toward you, I may have erred, but my heart has ever preserved the most affectionate veneration for you, and I think on you frequently with tears. In a few years, if I live so long, I shall be placed in your situation, looking back on the giddy vanities of human life, and all my consolations in the hopes of a happy futurity. . . .

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\* This poem, as published in the *Port Folio*, contains two thousand two hundred and eighteen lines. It is illustrated with four plates, two of which were engraved by George Cooke of London.—*Ord.*

## LETTER LIII.

'Collection of drawings of the birds to be found in Pennsylvania—criticism invited  
—honour of his friendship.

*To Mr. WILLIAM BARTRAM.*  
Union School, July 2, 1805.

. . . I dare say you will smile at my presumption, when I tell you that I have seriously begun to make a collection of drawings of the birds to be found in Pennsylvania, or that occasionally pass through it: twenty-eight, as the beginning, I send for your opinion. They are, I hope, inferior to what I shall produce, though as close copies of the originals as I could make. One or two of these I cannot find either in your nomenclature, or among the seven volumes of Edwards. I have never been able to find the bird Mr. Jefferson speaks of, and begin to think that it must be the Wood Robin, though it seems strange that he should represent it as so hard to be seen. Any hint for promoting my plan, or enabling me to execute better, I will receive from you with much pleasure. I have resigned every other amusement, except reading and fiddling, for this design, which I shall not give up without making a fair trial.

Criticise these, my dear friend, without fear of offending me—this will instruct, but not discourage me. For there is not among all our naturalists one who knows so well what they are, and how they ought to be represented. In the mean time accept of my best wishes for your happiness—wishes as sincere as ever one human being breathed for another. To your advice and encouraging encomiums I am indebted for these few specimens, and for all that will follow. They may yet tell posterity that I was honoured with your friendship, and that to your inspiration they owe their existence. . . .

## LETTER LIV.

'Attempts' at etching—all anxiety.

*To the same.*

November 29, 1805.

. . . ; I have been amusing myself this some time in attempting to etch ; and now send you a proof-sheet of my first performance in this way. Be so good as communicate to me your own corrections, and those of your young friend and pupil. I will receive them as a very kind and particular favour. The drawings which I also send, that you may compare them together, were done from birds in full plumage, and in the best order. My next attempt in etching will perhaps be better, everything being new to me in this. I will send you the first impression I receive after I finish the plate. . . .

## LETTER LV.

'Another proof'—enthusiasm and modesty.

*To the Same.*

Saturday, January 4th, 1806.

Mr. Wilson's affectionate compliments to Mr. Bartram ; and sends for his amusement and correction another proof of his Birds of the United States. The colouring being chiefly done last night, must soften criticism a little. Will be thankful for my friend's advice and correction.\*

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\* The two first plates of the *Ornithology* are those which the author etched himself. The writer of this sketch has in his possession a proof of the first one, which he preserves as a relic of no small value. It is inscribed with the author's name.—*Orl.*

## + LETTER LVI.

Mr. ——— who in 1804 went down to Ohio . . . . in a small 'bateau'—intended similar 'journey'—the President—exploration 'of the shores of the Mississippi.'

*To the Same.*

January 27, 1806.

. . . . Being in town on Saturday, I took the opportunity of calling on Mr. ———, who, in 1804, went down the Ohio, with one companion, in a small bateau. They sometimes proceeded seventy miles in twenty-four hours, going often night and day. They had an awning; and generally slept on board the boat, without ever catching cold, or any inconvenience by moschetoes, except when in the neighbourhood of swamps. He describes the country as exceedingly beautiful. The object of their journey being trade, they had neither gun nor fishing-tackle; and paid little or no attention to natural objects. He says the navigation of a bateau is perfectly easy, and attended with no hazard whatever. One solitary adventurer passed them in a small boat, going from Wheeling to New Orleans.

If, my dear friend, we should be so happy as to go together, what would you think of laying our design before Mr. Jefferson, with a view to procure his advice, and recommendation to influential characters in the route? Could we procure his approbation and patronage, they would secure our success. Perhaps he might suggest some improvements in our plan. Had we a good companion, intimately acquainted with mineralogy, who would submit to our economical plan of proceeding, it would certainly enhance the value of the expedition. However, this I have no hopes of.

I see, by the newspapers, that Mr. Jefferson designs to employ persons to explore the shores of the Mississippi the ensuing Summer: surely our exertions would promote his wishes. I write these particulars that you may give them the consideration they deserve; and will call upon you to deliberate further on the affair. . . . .

## † LETTER LVII.

Sketch of a letter to President Jefferson—'serious in my design of traversing our southern wilderness.'

*To the Same.*

February 3, 1806.

. . . . The enclosed sketch of a letter is submitted for your opinion, and, if approved, I must request of you the favour to enclose it in one of your own to Mr. Jefferson. You see I am serious in my design of traversing our southern wildernesses. Disappointed in your company, I have no hopes in another's that would add any value to the Ohio tour. I am therefore driven to this expedient, and I hope it will succeed. Please to let me hear your sentiments on this affair to-morrow morning; and oblige yours, &c. . . .

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 † LETTER LVIII.

'Infinitely obliged' for 'favourable opinion' sent to the President—'I will merit the character . . . or perish,' &c.

*To the Same.*

February 5, 1806.

I am infinitely obliged to you, my dear friend, for your favourable opinion of me, transmitted to the President. Should an engagement be the consequence, I will merit the character which you have given of me, or perish in the endeavour to deserve it. Accept my assurances of perpetual affection and esteem.

The letters go off to-morrow. . . .



## † LETTER LIX.

Engaged 'these several years in collecting materials and finishing drawings from Nature, with the design of publishing a new Ornithology of the United States of America'—seeks employment on the Government expedition.

*To President* JEFFERSON.

Kingsessing, February 6, 1806.

SIR,

Having been engaged, these several years, in collecting materials, and finishing drawings from Nature, with the design of publishing a new Ornithology of the United States of America, so deficient in the works of Catesby, Edwards, and other Europeans, I have traversed the greater part of our northern and eastern districts; and have collected many birds undescribed by these naturalists. Upwards of one hundred drawings are completed; and two plates in folio already engraved. But as many beautiful tribes frequent the Ohio, and the extensive country through which it passes, that probably never visit the Atlantic States; and as faithful representations of these can be taken only from living nature, or from birds newly killed; I have planned an expedition down that river, from Pittsburg to the Mississippi, thence to New Orleans, and to continue my researches by land in return to Philadelphia. I had engaged as a companion and assistant Mr. William Bartram of this place, whose knowledge of Botany, as well as Zoology, would have enabled me to make the best of the voyage, and to collect many new specimens in both these departments. Sketches of these were to have been taken on the spot; and the subjects put in a state of preservation to finish our drawings from, as time would permit. We intended to set out from Pittsburg about the beginning of May; and expected to reach New Orleans in September.

But my venerable friend, Mr. Bartram, taking into more serious consideration his advanced age, being near seventy, and the weakness of his eye-sight; and apprehensive of his inability to encounter the fatigues and deprivations unavoidable in so extensive a tour; having, to my extreme regret, and the real loss of science, been induced to decline the journey, I had reluctantly

abandoned the enterprise, and all hopes of accomplishing my purpose; till hearing that your Excellency had it in contemplation to send travellers this ensuing Summer up the Red River, the Arkansas, and other tributary streams of the Mississippi; and believing that my services might be of advantage to some of these parties, in promoting your Excellency's design, while the best opportunities would be afforded me of procuring subjects for the work which I have so much at heart; under these impressions I beg leave to offer myself for any of these expeditions; and can be ready at a short notice to attend your Excellency's orders.

Accustomed to the hardships of travelling, without a family, and an enthusiast in the pursuit of Natural History, I will devote my whole powers to merit your Excellency's approbation; and ardently wish for an opportunity of testifying the sincerity of my professions, and the deep veneration with which I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

ALEXANDER WILSON.\*

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† LETTER LX.

'Not the smallest ambition of being considered an orator'—politics 'beget many enemies in the old and new world'—will not take part in the 'debate,' but 'recite' a speech 'in the woods'—no answer from the President—late at night.

To Mr. WM. DUNCAN.

Gray's Ferry, Feb. 26, 1806.

. . . . Notwithstanding the great esteem I have for your judgment, in preference, many times, to my own, yet I believe we are both wrong in the proposed affair of Saturday week. I have not the smallest ambition of being considered an orator; and would it not, by some, be construed into vanity, or something worse, for

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\* Wilson was particularly anxious to accompany Pike, who commenced his journey from the cantonment in the Missouri for the sources of the Arkansas, &c. on the 15th July, 1806. — *Ord.*

me to go all the way from this place to deliver a political lecture at Milestown? Politics has begot me so many enemies, both in the old and new world, and has done me so little good, that I begin to think the less you and I harangue on that subject the better. I do not say this from any doubt I have of being able to say something on the subject, but much question the policy and prudence of it. If you and I attend punctually to the duties of our profession, and make our business our pleasure,—and the improvement of our pupils, with their good government, our chief aim,—honour and respectability, and success, will assuredly attend us, even if we never open our lips on politics.

These have been some of my reflections since we parted. I hope you will weigh them in your own mind, and acquiesce in my resolution of not interfering in the debate on Saturday, as we talked of. At the same time, I am really pleased to see the improvement the practice has produced in you, and would by no means wish to dissuade you from amusing and exercising your mind in this manner; because I know that your moderation in sentiment and conduct will always preserve you from ill will on any of these scores. But as it could add nothing to my fame, and as they have all heard me often enough on different subjects about Milestown, and as it would raise no new friends to you, but might open old sores in some of your present friends, I hope you will agree with me that it will be prudent to decline the affair. And as you have never heard me deliver any of my own compositions in this way, I will commit a speech to memory which I delivered at Milestown in the winter of 1800, and pronounce it to you when we are by ourselves in the woods, where we can offend nobody.

I have heard nothing from Washington yet, and I begin to think that either Mr. Jefferson expects a brush with the Spaniards, or has not received our letters; otherwise, he would never act so unpolitely to one for whom he has so much esteem as for Mr. Bartram. No hurry of business could excuse it. But if affairs are not likely to be settled with Spain, very probably the design of sending parties through Louisiana will be suspended. Indeed, I begin to think that if I should not be engaged by Mr. Jefferson, a

journey by myself, and at my own expense, at a time too when we are just getting our heads above water, as one may say, would not be altogether good policy. Perhaps in another year we might be able, without so much injury, to make a tour together through part of the south-west countries, which would double all the pleasures of the journey to me. I will proceed in the affair as you may think best, notwithstanding my eager wishes and the disagreeableness of my present situation. I write this letter in the schoolhouse—past ten at night—L.'s folks all gone to roost—the flying squirrels rattling in the loft above me, and the cats squalling in the cellar below. Wishing you a continuation of that success in teaching which has already done you so much credit, I bid you for the present good-night. . . .

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† LETTER LXI.

'Assistant editor of Rees's New Cyclopædia'—modest self-estimate—'shut up from the sweet scenes of rural nature.'

*To Mr. WILLIAM BARTRAM.*  
Philadelphia, April 22, 1806.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I take the liberty of informing you that, having been importuned to engage as assistant editor of that comprehensive and voluminous work, Rees's New Cyclopædia, now publishing here, and a generous salary offered me, I have now accepted of the same, and will commence my new avocation on Monday next.

This engagement will, I hope, enable me in more ways than one to proceed in my intended Ornithology, to which all my leisure moments will be devoted. In the meantime, I anticipate, with diffidence, the laborious and very responsible situation I am soon to be placed in, requiring a much more general fund of scientific knowledge and stronger powers of mind than I am possessed of; but all these objections have been overruled, and I am engaged, in conjunction with Mr. S. F. Bradford, to conduct the publication. In this pursuit I will often solicit your advice, and be

happy to communicate your observations to posterity. Shut up from the sweet scenes of rural nature, so dear to my soul, conceive to yourself the pleasures I shall enjoy in sometimes paying a visit to your charming Retreat, and you cannot doubt of frequently seeing your very sincere friend. . . .

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† LETTER LXII.

Introduction of 'Mr. Michaux'—the Falls of Niagara—drawings.

To Mr. WILSON at the Falls of Niagara.

Philadelphia, July 8, 1806.

DEAR SIR,

This will be handed to you by Mr. Michaux, a gentleman of an amiable character, and a distinguished naturalist, who is pursuing his botanical researches through North America, and intends visiting the Cataract of Niagara. The kindness I received from your family in 1804 makes me desirous that my friend, Mr. Michaux, should reside with you during his stay at Niagara; and any attention paid to him will be considered as done to myself, and suitable acknowledgments made in person by me on my arrival at Niagara, which I expect will be early next Spring.

You will be so good as give Mr. Michaux information respecting the late rupture of the rock at the Falls, of the burning spring above, and point out to him the place of descent to the Rapids below, with any other information respecting the wonderful scenery around you.

In the short stay I made, and the unfavourable weather I experienced, I was prevented from finishing my intended sketch equal to my wishes; but I design to spend several weeks with you, and not only take correct drawings, but particular descriptions of every thing relating to that stupendous Cataract, and to publish a more complete and satisfactory account, and a better representation of it, than has been yet done in the United States.\*

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\* Wilson's subsequent engagements prevented his return to the Falls, in conformity with his wishes; but his sketches were completed by an artist, engraved by George Cooke of London, and illustrate his poem of the "Foresters," which

I had a rough journey home through the Genessee country, which was covered with snow to the depth of fifteen inches, and continued so all the way to Albany. If you know of any gentlemen in your neighbourhood acquainted with botany, be so good as introduce Mr. Michaux to them. . . .

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\* LETTER LXIII.

Home-news rarely sent, as if 'some interdiction were laid by your government on correspondence to America'—School given up after ten years—engaged by Messrs. Bradford on Rees's Cyclopædia—additions and selections for America—salary 900 dollars—sad change from country to town—yellow fever—indifference—a water melon—cucumbers, &c.—Finlayson—pinks—Paisley—sister—Ovid—James—William Duncan—Milestown School—news of friends and countrymen—Charles Orr—Miss Robb—other friends—fires—anxious for tidings from home—intended emigration, advice on—longing to revisit Paisley—remembrances—letters promised and expected.

*To his Father.*

Philadelphia, August 24, 1806.

MY DEAR FATHER,

I hear so seldom from you and from Scotland, my native country, that it would seem as if some interdiction were laid by your Government on correspondence to America, this being the second letter since I received yours. On the 1st April last, I resigned a very troublesome business. After teaching nearly ten years, I was engaged by Messrs. Bradford & Co., booksellers in this city, to officiate as assistant editor of a very elegant edition of Rees's New Cyclopædia, to be comprehended in 22 quarto volumes, which they are now publishing, and which, in point of printing, engravings, &c., will, I doubt not, fully equal the original. My business consists in reading the work previous to its going to press, and making additions and selections, to render the articles respecting America more full and interest-

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was published in the *Port Folio*. These well-engraved views, which are two in number, convey a good idea of the famous Cataract; the "Great Pitch," in particular, is admirably represented.—*Ord*.



ing, to correct the sheets as they come from the press, visit the engravers, &c., &c., for which I am to be paid a salary of 900 dollars per annum. Having been so long accustomed to reside in the country, and particularly delighted with its rural charms, I felt considerable regret to exchange it for the confines of a crowded city, where the inhabitants are almost yearly put to the route by that terrible scourge, Yellow Fever; but where judgment approves habit, Science reconciles us to almost any change, and, though I occasionally visit the country with a kind of enthusiasm, I am yet satisfied to sacrifice even this pleasure for the hope of independence. This city is as healthy at present as in winter, and all fear of a visit from the fever this season is over. Everything is in abundance, particularly fruits and vegetables. A water melon that measured 13 inches in diameter by 20 inches, and weighed upwards of thirty pounds, was purchased by the lady of the house where I board for nine cents, or about fivepence of British money. Cucumbers have been actually sold for less than sixpence (British) per bushel; and peaches, apples, pears, &c., are also extremely cheap. These, in this country, form part of the necessaries of life. Flour rates about seven-and-a-half dollars per bushel. I heard from John Finlayson on Sunday last that all the family were well; and I had the pleasure of receiving from him about six weeks ago some of the finest pinks I ever saw, and which were greatly admired by our American florists here. I did not omit this opportunity of raising their admiration of the *flora* of my native country, by assuring them that these were but specimens of the inferior sort, and far surpassed by others of larger size and richer colour, which the gardens of a little village called the Seedhills of Paisley produces in the greatest luxuriance. I heard a few weeks ago from my sister Mary, who resides with her three youngest children in Ovid. James, who is now thirteen or fourteen, supports his mother, and she writes me that she lives very comfortably. All the rest are in or near this city. William, by indefatigable application, has acquired a good education, is well versed in mathematics, and writes very superior to what I have ever been able to do. He has been engaged since October as teacher of the



Milestown School where I resided so long, and he has attained the character of an excellent teacher and worthy man, which he truly merits. He will write to you soon himself ; at least, he promised so to me when I saw him last. His brother lives in the neighbourhood and follows the weaving, and goes occasionally to school to his brother, as I am extremely anxious he should rise above his present humble drudgery. We hear nothing of their father. His conduct furnishes an instance of parental depravity unexampled by anything I have known or read of, in rearing a most promising family, transporting them to a foreign country, and leaving them there to perish, while he himself cohabits with guilt, poverty, and infamy in Ireland. But I have no doubt the lash of remorse has already severely punished his unparalleled inhumanity, and I wish never to see him. If you know where Mr. Charles Orr is, or have an opportunity of seeing him, I wish you would inform him of the following particulars, viz., that Miss Mary Robb is married to Captain Campbell ; that poor Briden, the compositor, has been struck with the palsy ; that Mr. Todd and Mr. ———, his old landlord, died of the yellow fever ; and that the whole of the beautiful range of buildings where he lived in Dock Street have been destroyed by fire ; that Logan, the stonecutter, died of a consumption ; that Edwin and Lawson, the engineers, are both married ; that I boarded at the very house where I parted from him on his return to Britain. These circumstances, though uninteresting to you, will be otherwise to him ; and I know of no other way of communicating them, as he has never written me, and as I have no idea of where he is, or whether he be alive or dead. I am extremely anxious to hear from you, and David, I hope, will not neglect to write, particularly on the receipt of this. I had promised myself much pleasure from David's correspondence, but neither he or any of my relatives have written me these two years except yourself. You could not oblige me more than inform me of the changes that have taken place among my old acquaintances in Paisley and the Seedhills, and the state and improvements of my native town. Next to the welfare of yourself and my step-mother, these particulars would be extremely agreeable. Several of my old friends, I understand,

have been talking of coming to America, but wish persuasion and advice from those on this side of the Atlantic. But this is a matter of so much delicacy, that those who have once done it effectually will seldom do it again. And yet I do not know a single industrious Scotsman in the country but is in much better circumstances than he ever experienced in Britain. The mischief is, they have generally difficulties to surmount on their first arrival, which, together with the prepossession in favour of their native country and its habits, customs, &c., so natural to many, contribute to embitter their enjoyments, and make them feel little gratitude to those by whose persuasion they left their homes. There are some exceptions, however, and the best way is for every man to make such a matter of conscience for himself. Nothing could give me more pleasure than to spend a few weeks in Paisley, where, however, I fear I would find time, death, absence, &c., had made me a greater stranger and less known than in Philadelphia. Please to present my affectionate compliments to my brother David, to Thomas Wotherspoon, to John Bell and Duncan Wright, and to sister Peggy, Jean, and Janet, and particularly to my step-mother. I am happy to hear that William Urie is doing so well, and settled so near you. He and I might meet at the Cross of Paisley, I am persuaded, and not have the least recollection of each other. What havoc time, war, oppression, &c., &c., makes on mankind . . . and depriving them of what constitutes the sweetest enjoyments of human life—the social intercourse of true-loved friends, parents, and relations. You may calculate on soon hearing from me again more particularly, which nothing shall prevent me from but want of health. Business requires my close and constant attendance. I keep little or no company, and to hear from my aged father will be to me the greatest happiness. Please to direct to the care of Mr. Samuel F. Bradford, bookseller, Third Street, Philadelphia.

I remain,

MY DEAR FATHER,

Your very affectionate Son,

ALEXANDER WILSON.

## † LETTER LXIV.

'Proof-sheet' of prospectus of the Ornithology—in pursuit of birds—mischances and unsuccess—a 'profuse perspiration.'

To Mr. WM. BARTRAM.

PHILADELPHIA, 8th April, 1807.

. . . Enclosed is a proof-sheet of our prospectus ; as soon as the impressions are thrown off on fine paper, I will transmit one for Mr. L. This afternoon Mr. Lawson is to have one of the plates completely finished ; and I am going to set the copper-plate printer at work to print each bird in its natural colours, which will be a great advantage in colouring, as the black ink will not then stain the fine tints. We mean to bind in the prospectus at the end of the next half volume, for which purpose twenty-five hundred copies are to be thrown off ; and an agent will be appointed in every town in the Union. The prospectus will also be printed in all the newspapers, and everything done to promote the undertaking.

I hope you have made a beginning, and have already a collection of heads, bills, and claws, delineated. If this work should go on, it will be a five years' affair ; and may open the way to something more extensive ; for which reason I am anxious to have you with me to share the harvest.

I started this morning, by peep of day, with my gun, for the purpose of shooting a nuthatch. After jumping a hundred fences, and getting over the ancles in mud, (for I had put on my shoes for lightness), I found myself almost at the junction of the Schuylkill and Delaware, without success, there being hardly half an acre of woodland in the whole *neck* ; and the nuthatch generally frequents large-timbered woods. I returned home at eight o'clock, after getting completely wet, and in a profuse perspiration, which, contrary to the maxims of the doctors, has done me a great deal of good ; and I intend to repeat the dose, except that I shall leave out the ingredient of the wet feet, if otherwise convenient. Were I to prescribe such a remedy to Lawson, he would be ready to think

me mad. Moderate, nay, even pretty severe exercise, is the best medicine in the world for sedentary people, and ought not to be neglected on any account. . . .

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† LETTER LXV.

Approval of 'intended publication of American Ornithology'—'specific names' of birds—greetings and recollections of 'your little Paradise'—constant 'among musty books.'

*To the Same.*

Philadelphia, April 29, 1807.

MY DEAR SIR,

The receipt of yours of the 11th inst. in which you approve of my intended publication of American Ornithology, gave me much satisfaction ; and your promise of befriending me in the arduous attempt commands my unfeigned gratitude. From the opportunities I have lately had, of examining into the works of Americans, who have treated of this part of our natural history, I am satisfied that none of them have bestowed such minute attention on the subject as you yourself have done. Indeed, they have done little more than copied your nomenclature and observations, and referred to your authority. To have you, therefore, to consult with in the course of this great publication I consider a most happy and even auspicious circumstance ; and I hope you will, on all occasions, be a rigid censor, and kind monitor, whenever you find me deviating from the beauties of nature, or the truth of description.

The more I read and reflect upon the subject, the more dissatisfied I am with the *specific* names which have been used by almost every writer. A name should, if possible, be expressive of some peculiarity in colour, conformation, or habit ; if it will equally apply to two different species, it is certainly an improper one. Is *migratorius* an epithet peculiarly applicable to the robin ? Is it not equally so to almost every species of *turdus* we have ? *Europea* has been applied by Pennant to our large *sitta* or nut-

hatch, which is certainly a different species from the European, the latter being destitute of the black head, neck, and shoulders of ours. Latham calls it *carolinensis*, but it is as much an inhabitant of Pennsylvania and New York as Carolina. The small red-bellied *sitta* is called *canadensis* by Latham, a name equally objectionable with the other. *Turdus minor* seems also improper; in short I consider this part of the business as peculiarly perplexing; and I beg to have your opinion on the matter, particularly with respect to the birds I have mentioned, whether I shall hazard a new nomenclature, or, by copying, sanction what I do not approve of.

I hope you are in good health, enjoying in your little Paradise the advances of the Spring, shedding leaves, buds and blossoms, around her; and bringing in her train choirs of the sweetest songsters that earth can boast of; while every zephyr that plays around you breathes fragrance, Ah! how different my situation in this delightful season, immured among musty books, and compelled to forego the harmony of the woods for the everlasting din of the city; the very face of the blessed heavens involved in soot, and interrupted by walls and chimney-tops. But if I don't launch out into the woods and fields oftener than I have done these twelve-months, may I be transformed into a street musician. . . .

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† LETTER LXVI.

'Setting out' for the Eastern States—prospectus and subscribers.

*To the Same.*

Philadelphia, Sept. 21, 1808.

. . . . In a few minutes I set out for the Eastern States, through Boston to Maine, and back through the State of Vermont, in search of birds and subscribers. I regret that I have not been able to spend an evening with you before my departure. But I shall have a better stock of adventures to relate after my return.

I send a copy of the prospectus, and my best wishes for the happiness of the whole family. I leave my horse behind, and go by the

stage coach, as being the least troublesome. I hope to make discoveries in my tour, the least agreeable of which will, I fear, be—that I have bestowed a great deal of labour and expense to little purpose. But all these things will not prevent me from enjoying, as I pass along, the glorious face of Nature, and her admirable productions, while I have eyes to see, and taste and judgment to appreciate them. . . .

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† LETTER LXVII.

'Avoided saying anything either good or bad as to encouragement I have met with'  
—'I shall not sit down with folded hands.'

*To a Friend.*

Boston, October 10, 1803.

. . . . I have purposely avoided saying anything either good or bad, on the encouragement I have met with. I shall only say, that among the many thousands who have examined my book, and among these were men of the first character for taste and literature, I have heard nothing but expressions of the highest admiration and esteem. If I have been mistaken in publishing a work too good for the country, it is a fault not likely to be soon repeated, and will pretty severely correct itself. But whatever may be the result of these matters, I shall not sit down with folded hands, whilst anything can be done to carry my point : since God helps them who help themselves. I am fixing correspondents in every corner of these northern regions, like so many pickets and outposts, so that scarcely a *wren* or *tit* shall be able to pass along, from New York to Canada, but I shall get intelligence of it. . . .



## † LETTER LXVIII.

Various adventures—Colonel S. in ‘stage-coach’—‘enjoyed ride’—‘good-bye’ at Princeton—Drs Smith and M<sup>c</sup>Lean—Elizabethtown—Newark—New York—subscriptions for the ‘Ornithology’—‘Columbia’ College—a fellow-countryman—Newhaven by a packet—Hellgate ‘a place I had no intention of calling at in my tour’—the Sunday of New England—‘wooden spires’ infested with wood-peckers’ formerly—Literati—Middleton—‘muster-day’ and a Fair—Mr. A. useful—Hartford—notice<sup>d</sup> in the newspapers—landscape—Meeting-houses—‘town’ and ‘township’—Schools’ poor—Lawyers ‘swarm’—‘steady habits’ v. ‘laziness’—Boston—‘Bunker’s Hill’—‘pillar of bricks’ the memento.

To Mr. D. H. MILLAR.

Boston, October 12, 1808.

DEAR SIR,

I arrived here on Sunday last, after various adventures, the particulars of which, as well as the observations I have had leisure to make upon the passing scenery around me, I shall endeavour, as far as possible, to compress into this letter, for your own satisfaction, and that of my friends who may be interested for my welfare. My company in the stage coach to New York were all unknown to me, except Col. S., who was on his route to Fort Oswego, on Lake Ontario, to take command of the troops intended to be stationed on that part of the frontier, to prevent evasions of the embargo law. The sociable disposition and affability of the Colonel made this part of the journey pass very agreeably, for both being fond of walking, whenever the driver stopped to water, or drink grog, which was generally every six or eight miles, we set out on foot, and sometimes got on several miles before the coach overhauled us. By this method we enjoyed our ride, and with some little saving of horseflesh, which I know you will approve of. At Princeton I bade my fellow travellers good bye, as I had to wait upon the reverend doctors of the college. I took my book under my arm, put several copies of the prospectus



into my pocket, and walked up to this spacious sanctuary of literature. I could amuse you with some of my reflections on this occasion, but room will not permit. Dr. Smith, the president, and Dr. M'Lean, Professor of Natural History, were the only two I found at home. The latter invited me to tea, and both were much pleased and surprised with the appearance of the work. I expected to receive some valuable information from M'Lean, on the ornithology of the country, but I soon found, to my astonishment, that he scarcely knew a *sparrow* from a *woodpecker*. At his particular request, I left a specimen of the plates with him; and from what passed between us, I have hopes that he will pay more attention to this department of his profession than he has hitherto done. I visited several other literary characters; and, at about half-past eight the Pilot coming up, I took my passage in it to New Brunswick, which we reached at midnight, and where I immediately went to bed.

The next morning was spent in visiting the few gentlemen who were likely to patronise my undertaking. I had another task of the same kind at Elizabethtown; and, without tiring you with details that would fill a volume, I shall only say that I reached Newark that day, having gratified the curiosity, and feasted the eyes, of a great number of people, who repaid me with the most extravagant compliments, which I would have very willingly exchanged for a few simple *subscriptions*. I spent nearly the whole of Saturday in Newark, where my book attracted as many starrers as a bear or a mammoth would have done; and I arrived in New York the same evening. The next day I wrote a number of letters, enclosing copies of the prospectus, to different gentlemen in town. In the afternoon of Tuesday I took my book, and waited on each of these gentlemen to whom I had written the preceding day. Among these I found some friends, but more admirers. The professors of Columbia College expressed much esteem for my performance. The professor of languages, being a Scotchman, and also a Wilson, seemed to feel all the pride of national partiality so common to his countrymen; and would have done me any favour in his power. I spent the whole of this week traversing the streets, from one particular house to another, till, I believe,

I became almost as well known as the public crier, or the clerk of the market, for I could frequently perceive gentlemen point me out to others as I passed with my book under my arm.

On Sunday morning, October 2, I went on board a packet for New Haven, distant about ninety miles. The wind was favourable, and carried us rapidly through Hellgate, (a place I had no intention of calling at in my tour) on the other side of which we found upwards of sixty vessels beating up for a passage. The Sound here, between Long Island and the main, is narrowed to less than half a mile, and filled with small islands, and enormous rocks under water, among which the tide roars and boils violently, and has proved fatal to many a seaman. At high water it is nearly as smooth as any other place, and can then be safely passed. The country, on the New York side, is ornamented with handsome villas, painted white, and surrounded by great numbers of Lombardy poplars. The breeze increasing to a gale, in eight hours from the time we set sail the high red-fronted mountain of New Haven rose to our view. In two hours more we landed; and, by the stillness and solemnity of the streets, recollected we were in New England, and that it was Sunday, which latter circumstance had been almost forgotten on board the packet-boat.

This town is situated upon a sandy plain; and the streets are shaded with elm trees and poplars. In a large park or common, covered with grass, and crossed by two streets, and several foot paths, stand the church, the State house and college buildings, which last are one hundred and eighty yards in front. From these structures rise four or five wooden spires, which, in former time, as one of the professors informed me, were so infested by woodpeckers, which bored them in all directions, that to preserve their steeple from destruction, it became necessary to set people, with guns, to watch and shoot these invaders of the sanctuary. Just about the town the pasture-fields and corn look well, but a few miles off, the country is poor and ill cultivated.

The *literati* of New Haven received me with politeness and respect; and after making my usual rounds, which occupied a day and a half, I set off for Middletown, twenty-two miles distant.

The country through which I passed was generally flat and sandy—in some places whole fields were entirely covered with sand, not a blade of vegetation to be seen, like some parts of New Jersey. Round Middletown, however, the country is really beautiful—the soil rich; and here I first saw the river Connecticut, stretching along the east side of the town, which consists of one very broad street, with rows of elms on each side. On entering I found the streets filled with troops, it being muster-day; and I counted two hundred and fifty horse, and six hundred foot, all in uniform. The sides of the street were clogged up with waggons, carts, and wheel-barrow, filled with bread, roast beef, fowls, cheese, liquors, barrels of cider, and rum bottles. Some were singing out, “Here’s the best brand you ever put into your *head!*” others in dozens shouting, “Here’s the round and sound gingerbread! most capital gingerbread!” In one place I observed a row of twenty or thirty country girls, drawn up with their backs to a fence, and two young fellows supplying them with rolls of bread from a neighbouring stall, which they ate with a hearty appetite, keeping nearly as good time with their grinders, as the militia did with their muskets. In another place the crowd had formed a ring, within which they danced to the catgut scrapings of an old negro. The spectators looked on with as much gravity as if they were listening to a sermon; and the dancers laboured with such seriousness, that it seemed more like a penance imposed on the poor devils, for past sins, than mere amusement.

I waited on a Mr. A. of this town; and by him I was introduced to several others. He also furnished me with a good deal of information respecting the birds of New England. He is a great sportsman—a man of fortune and education—and has a considerable number of stuffed birds, some of which he gave me, besides letters to several gentlemen of influence in Boston. I endeavoured to recompense him in the best manner I could, and again pursued my route to the north-east. The country between this and Hartford is extremely beautiful, much resembling that between Philadelphia and Frankford. The road is a hard sandy soil; and in one place I had an immense prospect of the surrounding country, nearly equal to that which we saw returning

from Easton, but less covered with woods. On reaching Hartford, I waited on Mr. G., a member of Congress, who recommended me to several others, particularly a Mr. W. a gentleman of taste and fortune, who was extremely obliging. The publisher of a newspaper here expressed the highest admiration of the work, and has since paid many handsome compliments to it in his publication, as three other editors did in New York. This is a species of currency that will neither purchase plates, nor pay the printer; but, nevertheless, it is gratifying to the vanity of an author—when nothing better can be got. My journey from Hartford to Boston, through Springfield, Worcester, &c., one hundred and twenty-eight miles, it is impossible for me to detail at this time. From the time I entered Massachusetts until within ten miles of Boston, which distance is nearly two-thirds the length of the whole State, I took notice that the principal features of the country were stony mountains, rocky pasture fields, and hills and swamps adorned with pines. The fences, in every direction, are composed of strong stones; and, unless a few straggling, self-planted, stunted apple trees, overgrown with moss, deserve the name, there is hardly an orchard to be seen in ten miles. Every six or eight miles you come to a meeting-house, painted white, with a spire. I could perceive little difference in the form or elevation of their steeples.

The people here make no distinction between *town* and *township*; and travellers frequently asked the driver of the stagecoach, "What town are we now in?" when perhaps we were upon the top of a miserable barren mountain, several miles from a house. It is in vain to reason with the people on the impropriety of this—custom makes every absurdity proper. There is scarcely any currency in this country but paper, and I solemnly declare that I do not recollect having seen one hard dollar since I left New York. Bills even of twenty-five-cents, of a hundred different banks, whose very names one has never heard of before, are continually in circulation. I say nothing of the jargon which prevails in the country. Their boasted schools, if I may judge by the state of their school-houses, are no better than our own.

Lawyers swarm in every town, like locusts; almost every door

has the word *Office* painted over it, which, like the web of a spider, points out the place where the spoiler lurks for his prey. There is little or no improvement in agriculture; in fifty miles I did not observe a single grain or stubble field, though the country has been cleared and settled these one hundred and fifty years. In short, the *steady habits* of a great portion of the inhabitants of those parts of New England through which I passed, seem to be laziness, law bickerings, and . . . . A man here is as much ashamed of being seen walking the streets on Sunday, unless in going and returning from church, as many would be of being seen going to a . . . . .

As you approach Boston the country improves in its appearance; the stone fences give place to those of posts and rails; the road becomes wide and spacious; and everything announces a better degree of refinement and civilization. It was dark when I entered Boston, of which I shall give you some account in my next. I have visited the celebrated Bunker's Hill, and no devout pilgrim ever approached the sacred tomb of his holy prophet with more awful enthusiasm, and profound veneration, than I felt in tracing the grass-grown intrenchments of this hallowed spot, made immortal by the bravery of those heroes who defended it, whose ashes are now mingled with its soil, and of whom a mean, beggarly *pillar of bricks* is all the memento. . . . .

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† LETTER LXIX.

Visit to Boston—secretary to John Adams—Bunker's Hill—veterans—University at Cambridge—Boston—description—Salem—New Hampshire—Maine—Iorn scenery—Albany—O's and Ah's.

*To the Same,*

Windsor, Vermont, October 26, 1808.

DEAR SIR,

I wrote you two or three weeks ago from Boston, where I spent about a week. A Mr. S., formerly private secretary to John

Adams, introduced me to many of the first rank in the place, whose influence procured me an acquaintance with others; and I journeyed through the streets of Boston with my book, as I did at New York and other places, visiting all the literary characters I could find access to.

I spent one morning examining Bunker's Hill, accompanied by Lieutenant Miller and Sergeant Carter, two old soldiers of the revolution, who were both in that celebrated battle, and who pointed out to me a great number of interesting places. The brother of General Warren, who is a respectable physician of Boston, became very much my friend, and related to me many other matters respecting the engagement.

I visited the University at Cambridge, where there is a fine library, but the most tumultuous set of students I ever saw.

From the top of Bunker's Hill, Boston, Charlestown, the ocean, islands, and adjacent country, form the most beautifully varied prospect I ever beheld.

The streets of Boston are a perfect labyrinth. The markets are dirty; the fish market is so filthy that I will not disgust you by a description of it. Wherever you walk, you hear the most hideous howling, as if some miserable wretch were expiring on the wheel at every corner; this, however, is nothing but the draymen shouting to their horses. Their drays are twenty-eight feet long, drawn by two horses, and carry ten barrels of flour. From Boston I set out for Salem, the country between swampy, and in some places the most barren, rocky, and desolate in nature. Salem is a neat little town. The wharves were crowded with vessels. One wharf here is twenty hundred and twenty-two feet long. I stayed here two days, and again set off for Newburyport, through a rocky, uncultivated, sterile country.

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I travelled on through New Hampshire, stopping at every place where I was likely to do any business; and went as far east as Portland in Maine, where I staid three days, and the Supreme Court being then sitting, I had an opportunity of seeing and conversing with people from the remotest boundaries of the United States in this quarter, and received much interesting information



from them in regard to the birds that frequent these northern regions. From Portland I directed my course across the country, among dreary savage glens, and mountains covered with pines and hemlocks, amid whose black and half-burnt trunks the everlasting rocks and stones, that cover this country, "grinned horribly." One hundred and fifty-seven miles brought me to Dartmouth College, Newhampshire, on the Vermont line. Here I paid my addresses to the reverend fathers of literature, and met with a kind and obliging reception. Dr. Wheelock, the president, made me eat at his table, and the professors vied with each other to oblige me.

I expect to be in Albany in five days, and if the Legislature be sitting, I shall be detained perhaps three days there. In eight days more I hope to be in Philadelphia. I have laboured with the zeal of a knight errant in exhibiting this book of mine, wherever I went, travelling with it, like a beggar with his bantling, from town to town, and from one country to another. I have been loaded with praises—with compliments and kindnesses—shaken almost to pieces in stage coaches; have wandered among strangers, hearing the O's and Ah's, and telling the same story a thousand times over—and for what? Ay, that's it! You are very anxious to know, and you shall know the whole when I reach Philadelphia.

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† LETTER LXX.

Literary pilgrimage—compliments 'chiefly due to the taste and skill of the engraver'—the only objection 'has been the sum of one hundred and twenty dollars'—only 'forty-one' names obtained—visit to Thomas Paine—like 'Bardolph'—'Yankees rather lowered in my esteem'—'two hundred years behind Pennsylvania'—Boston, 'long wooden bridges'—Bunker's Hill neglected—'three hours' spent with two veterans—Maine—the Atlantic—song of 'Freedom and Peace'—Vermont—plans.

To Mr. ALEXANDER LAWSON.

Albany, November 3, 1808.

DEAR SIR,

Having a few leisure moments at disposal, I will devote them to your service in giving you a sketch of some cir-



cumstances in my long literary pilgrimage, not mentioned in my letters to Mr. Miller. And in the first place, I ought to thank you for the thousands of compliments I have received for my birds, from persons of all descriptions, which were chiefly due to the taste and skill of the engraver. In short, the book, in all its parts, so far exceeds the ideas and expectations of the first literary characters in the eastern section of the United States, as to command their admiration and respect. The only objection has been the sum of *one hundred and twenty dollars*, which, in innumerable instances, has risen like an evil genius between me and my hopes. Yet I doubt not but when those copies subscribed for are delivered, and the book a little better known, the whole number will be disposed of, and perhaps encouragement given to go on with the rest. To effect this, to me, most desirable object, I have encountered the fatigues of a long, circuitous, and expensive journey, with a zeal that has increased with increasing difficulties; and sorry am I to say that the whole number of subscribers which I have obtained amounts only to *forty-one*.

While in New York I had the curiosity to call on the celebrated author of the "Rights of Man." He lives in Greenwich, a short way from the city. In the only decent apartment of a small indifferent-looking frame house, I found this extraordinary man, sitting wrapt in a night gown, the table before him covered with newspapers, with pen and ink beside him. Paine's face would have excellently suited the character of *Bardolph*; but the penetration and intelligence of his eye bespeak the man of genius, and of the world. He complained to me of his inability to walk, an exercise he was formerly fond of;—he examined my book, leaf by leaf, with great attention—desired me to put down his name as a subscriber, and, after inquiring particularly for Mr. P. and Mr. B., wished to be remembered to both.

My journey through almost the whole of New England has rather lowered the Yankees in my esteem. Except a few neat academies, I found their schoolhouses equally ruinous and deserted with ours—fields covered with stones—stone fences—scrubby oaks and pine trees—wretched orchards—scarcely one grain field in twenty miles—the taverns along the road dirty, and filled with

loungers, brawling about law suits and politics—the people snappish, and extortioners, lazy, and two hundred years behind the Pennsylvanians in agricultural improvements. I traversed the country bordering the river Connecticut for nearly two hundred miles. Mountains rose on either side, sometimes three, six, or eight miles apart, the space between almost altogether alluvial; the plains fertile, but not half cultivated. From some projecting headlands I had immense prospects of the surrounding countries, every where clothed in pine, hemlock, and scrubby oak.

It was late in the evening when I entered Boston, and, whirling through the narrow, lighted streets, or rather lanes, I could form but a very imperfect idea of the town. Early the next morning, resolved to see where I was, I sought out the way to Beacon Hill, the highest part of the town, and whence you look down on the roofs of the houses—the bay interspersed with islands—the ocean—the surrounding country, and distant mountains of New Hampshire; but the most singular objects are the long wooden bridges, of which there are five or six, some of them three-quarters of a mile long, uniting the towns of Boston and Charlestown with each other, and with the main land. I looked round with an eager eye for the eminence so justly celebrated in the history of the revolution of the United States, Bunker's Hill, but I could see nothing that I could think deserving of the name, till a gentleman, who stood by, pointed out a white monument upon a height beyond Charlestown, which he said was the place. I explored my way thither, without paying much attention to other passing objects; and, in tracing the streets of Charlestown, was astonished and hurt at the indifference with which the inhabitants directed me to the place. I inquired if there were any person still living here who had been in the battle, and I was directed to a Mr. Miller, who was a lieutenant in this memorable affair. He is a man of about sixty—stout, remarkably fresh coloured, with a benign and manly countenance. I introduced myself without ceremony—shook his hand with sincere cordiality, and said, with some warmth, that I was proud of the honour of meeting with one of the heroes of Bunker's Hill—the first unconquerable champions of their country. He looked at me, pressed my hand in his, and his tears

instantly glistened in his eyes, which as instantly called up corresponding ones in my own. In our way to the place, he called on a Mr. Carter, who, he said, was also in the action, and might recollect some circumstances which he had forgotten. With these two veterans I spent three hours, the most interesting to me of any of my life. As they pointed out to me the route of the British—the American entrenchments—the place where the greatest slaughter was made—the spot where Warren fell, and where he was thrown amid heaps of the dead, I felt as though I could have encountered a whole battalion myself in the same glorious cause. The old soldiers were highly delighted with my enthusiasm; we drank a glass of wine to the memory of the illustrious dead, and parted almost with regret.

From Boston to Portland, in the District of Maine, you are almost always in the neighbourhood, or within sight of, the Atlantic. The country may be called a mere skeleton of rocks, and fields of sand, in many places entirely destitute of wood, except a few low scrubby junipers, in others covered with pines of a diminutive growth. On entering the tavern in Portland, I took up the newspaper of the day, in which I found my song of *Freedom and Peace*, which I afterwards heard read before a numerous company (for the Supreme Court was sitting), with great emphasis, as a most excellent song; but I said nothing on the subject.

From Portland I steered across the country for the northern parts of Vermont, among barren, savage, pine-covered mountains, through regions where Nature and art have done infinitely less to make it a fit residence for man than any country I ever traversed. Among these dreary tracts I found winter had already commenced, and the snow several inches deep. I called at Dartmouth College, the president of which, as well as of all I visited in New England, subscribed. Though sick with a severe cold, and great fatigue, I continued my route to this place, passing and calling at great numbers of small towns in my way.

The Legislature is at present in session—the newspapers have to-day taken notice of my book, and inserted my advertisement—I shall call on the principal people—employ an agent among some of the booksellers in Albany, and return home by New York. . . .

## † LETTER LXXI.

Washington—Baltimore—Annapolis, 'Houses of the Legislature'—no subscribers—  
 'pursued route through the tobacco fields, sloughs and swamps'—negroes  
 'very numerous and most wretchedly clad,' but most civil—Washington,  
 sketch of—'one brick house' building—'the President received me very  
 kindly'—a 'letter to a gentleman in Virginia'—Georgetown and Alexandria.

*To Mr. D. H. MILLER.*

Washington City, December 24, 1808.

DEAR SIR,

I sit down, before leaving this place, to give you a few particulars of my expedition. I spent nearly a week in Baltimore, with tolerable success, having procured sixteen subscribers there. In Annapolis, I passed my book through both Houses of the Legislature: the wise men of Maryland stared and gaped, from bench to bench; but having never heard of such a thing as one hundred and twenty dollars for a book, the ayes for subscribing were none; and so it was unanimously determined in the negative. Nowise discouraged by this sage decision, I pursued my route through the tobacco fields, sloughs and swamps, of this illiterate corner of the State, to Washington, distant thirty-eight miles; and in my way opened fifty-five gates. I was forewarned that I should meet with many of these embarrassments, and I opened twenty-two of them with all the patience and philosophy I could muster; but when I still found them coming thicker and faster, my patience and philosophy both abandoned me, and I saluted every new gate (which obliged me to plunge into the mud to open it) with perhaps less Christian resignation than I ought to have done. The negroes there are very numerous, and most wretchedly clad: their whole covering, in many instances, assumes the appearance of neither coat, waistcoat, nor breeches, but a motley mass of coarse, dirty woollen rags, of various colours, gathered up about them. When I stopped at some of the negro huts to inquire the road, both men and women huddled up their filthy bundles of rags around them, with both arms, in order to cover their nakedness, and came out, very civilly, to show me the way.

I cannot pretend, within the bounds of a letter, to give you a complete description of Washington. It consists of a great extent of confined commons, one-half of which is nearly level, and little higher than the Potomac; the other parts, on which the Capitol and President's house are built, are high and commanding. The site is much better than I expected to find it; and is certainly a noble place for a great metropolis. I saw one brick house building, which is the only improvement, of that kind, going on at present. The taverns and boarding houses here are crowded with an odd assemblage of characters. Fat placemen, expectants, contractors, petitioners, office-hunters, lumber-dealers, salt-manufacturers, and numerous other adventurers. Among the rest are deputations from different Indian nations, along our distant frontiers, who are come hither to receive their last alms from the President, previous to his retirement.

The President received me very kindly. I asked for nobody to introduce me, but merely sent him in a line that I was there; when he ordered me to be immediately admitted. He has given me a letter to a gentleman in Virginia, who is to introduce me to a person there, who, Mr. Jefferson says, has spent his whole life in studying the manners of our birds; and from whom I am to receive a world of facts and observations. The President intended to send for this person himself, and to take down, from his mouth, what he knows on the subject; thinking it a pity, as he says, that the knowledge he possesses should die with him. But he has entrusted the business to me, and I have promised him an account of our interview.

All the subscribers I have gleaned here amount to seventeen. I shall set off, on finishing this letter, to Georgetown and Alexandria. I will write you, or some of my friends, from Richmond. . . .

## † LETTER LXXII.

Still journeying—Norfolk—‘news-carriers delivered his papers from a boat, while he poled along through the mire’—‘a flat pine-covered country from Norfolk to Suffolk’—‘bilious fevers’—Jerusalem—‘conveyed in a boat termed a *flat*’—swamps and ice—North Carolina ‘hogs,’ &c.—‘toddy’ universal—turpentine—taverns ‘most desolate and beggarly’—‘river Taw’—‘shad fishery’—Wilmington—‘general features’ of North Carolina—alligators and a dog—Wackamaw—‘something better than 600 head of blacks’—‘horse sold’ by exchange—a bad bargain—Charlestown—sketch of—going onward.

*To the Same.*

Charleston, February 22, 1809.

DEAR SIR,

I have passed through a considerable extent of country since I wrote you last ; and met with a variety of adventures, some of which may perhaps amuse you. Norfolk turned out better than I expected. I left that place on one of the coldest mornings I have experienced since leaving Philadelphia. . . .

. . . I mentioned to you in my last that the streets of Norfolk were in a most disgraceful state ; but I was informed that some time before they had been much worse ; that at one time the news-carrier delivered his papers from a boat which he poled along through the mire ; and that a party of sailors, having nothing better to do, actually launched a ship’s long-boat into the streets, rowing along with four oars through the mud, while one stood at the bow, heaving the lead, and singing out the depth.

I passed through a flat, pine covered country, from Norfolk to Suffolk, twenty-four miles distant, and lodged in the way in the house of a planter, who informed me that every year, in August and September, almost all his family are laid up with the bilious fever ; that at one time forty of his people were sick ; and that of thirteen children only three were living. Two of these, with their mother, appeared likely not to be long tenants of this world. Thirty miles farther, I came to a small place on the river Nottaway,



called Jerusalem. Here I found the river swelled to such an extraordinary height that the oldest inhabitant had never seen the like. After passing along the bridge, I was conveyed in a boat termed a *flat* a mile and three-quarters through the woods, where the torrent sweeping along in many places rendered this sort of navigation rather disagreeable. I proceeded on my journey, passing through solitary pine woods, perpetually interrupted by swamps that covered the road with water two and three feet deep, frequently half a mile at a time, looking like a long river or pond. These in the afternoon were surmountable; but the weather being exceedingly severe, they were covered every morning with a sheet of ice, from half an inch to an inch thick, that cut my horse's legs and breast. After passing a bridge, I had many times to wade, and twice to swim my horse, to get to the shore. I attempted to cross the Roanoke at three different ferries, thirty-five miles apart, and at last succeeded at a place about fifteen miles below Halifax. A violent snow storm made the roads still more execrable.

The productions of these parts of North Carolina are hogs, turpentine, tar, and apple brandy. A tumbler of toddy is usually the morning's beverage of the inhabitants, as soon as they get out of bed. So universal is the practice, that the first thing you find them engaged in, after rising, is preparing the brandy *toddy*. You can scarcely meet a man whose lips are not parched and chapped or blistered with drinking this poison. Those who do not drink it, they say, are sure of the ague. I, however, escaped. The pine woods have a singular appearance, every tree being stripped, on one or more sides, of the bark, for six or seven feet up. The turpentine covers these parts in thick masses. I saw the people, in different parts of the woods, mounted on benches, chopping down the sides of the trees; leaving a trough or box in the tree for the turpentine to run into. Of hogs they have immense multitudes; one person will sometimes own five hundred. The leaders have bells round their necks; and every drove knows its particular call, whether it be a conch-shell, or the bawling of a negro, though half a mile off. Their owners will sometimes drive them for four or five days to a market, without once feeding them.



The taverns are the most desolate and beggarly imaginable: bare, bleak, and dirty walls;—one or two old broken chairs, and a bench, form all the furniture. The white females seldom make their appearance; and every thing must be transacted through the medium of negroes. At supper, you sit down to a meal, the very sight of which is sufficient to deaden the most eager appetite; and you are surrounded by half-a-dozen dirty, half-naked blacks, male and female, whom any man of common scent might smell a quarter of a mile off. The house itself is raised upon props, four or five feet; and the space below is left open for the hogs, with whose charming vocal performance the wearied traveller is serenaded the whole night long, till he is forced to curse the hogs, the house, and every thing about it.

I crossed the river Taw at Washington, for Newbern, which stands upon a sandy plain, between the rivers Trent and Neuse, both of which abound with alligators. Here I found the shad fishery begun, on the 5th instant; and wished to have some of you with me to assist in dissecting some of the finest shad I ever saw. Thence to Wilmington was my next stage, one hundred miles, with only one house for the accommodation of travellers on the road; two landlords having been broken up with the fever.

The general features of North Carolina, where I crossed it, are immense, solitary, pine savannas, through which the road winds among stagnant ponds, swarming with alligators; dark, sluggish creeks, of the colour of brandy, over which are thrown high wooden bridges, without railings, and so crazy and rotten as not only to alarm one's horse, but also the rider, and to make it a matter of thanksgiving with both when they get fairly over, without going through; enormous cypress swamps, which, to a stranger, have a striking, desolate, and ruinous appearance. Picture to yourself a forest of prodigious trees, rising, as thick as as they can grow, from a vast flat and impenetrable morass, covered for ten feet from the ground with reeds. The leafless limbs of the cypresses are clothed with an extraordinary kind of moss (*Tillandsia usneoides*), from two to ten feet long, in such quantities that fifty men could conceal themselves in one tree. Nothing in this country struck me with such surprise as the pros-

pect of several thousand acres of such timber, loaded, as it were, with many million tons of tow, waving in the wind. I attempted to penetrate several of these swamps, with my gun, in search of something new ; but, except in some chance places, I found it altogether impracticable. I coasted along their borders, however, in many places, and was surprised at the great profusion of ever-greens, of numberless sorts ; and a variety of berries that I knew nothing of. Here I found multitudes of birds that never winter with us in Pennsylvania, living in abundance. Though the people told me that the alligators are so numerous as to destroy many of their pigs, calves, dogs, &c., yet I have never been enabled to get my eye on one, though I have been several times in search of them with my gun. In Georgia, they tell me, they are ten times more numerous ; but I expect some sport among them. I saw a dog at the river Santee, who swims across when he pleases, in defiance of these voracious animals ; when he hears them behind him, he wheels round, and attacks them, often seizing them by the snout. They generally retreat, and he pursues his route again, serving every one that attacks him in the same manner. He belongs to the boatman ; and, when left behind, always takes to the water.

As to the character of the North Carolinians, were I to judge of it by the specimens which I met with in taverns, I should pronounce them to be the most ignorant, debased, indolent and dissipated, portion of the Union. But I became acquainted with a few such noble exceptions, that, for *their* sakes, I am willing to believe they are all better than they seemed to be.

Wilmington contains about three thousand souls ; and yet there is not one cultivated field within several miles of it. The whole country, on this side of the river, is a mass of sand, into which you sink up to the ankles ; and hardly a blade of grass is to be seen. All about is pine barrens. . . .

From Wilmington I rode through solitary pine savannas, and cypress swamps, as before ; sometimes thirty miles without seeing a hut, or human being. On arriving at the Wackamaw, Pedee, and Black river, I made long zigzags among the rich nabobs, who live on their rice plantations, amidst large villages of negro huts.

One of these gentlemen told me that he had "something better than six hundred head of blacks!" These excursions detained me greatly. The roads to the Plantations were so long, so difficult to find, and so bad, and the hospitality of the Planters was such, that I could scarcely get away again. I ought to have told you that the deep sands of South Carolina had so worn out my horse, that, with all my care, I found he would give up. Chance led me to the house of a planter, named V., about forty miles north of the river Wackamaw, where I proposed to bargain with him, and to give up my young blood horse for another in exchange; giving him at least as good a character as he deserved. He asked twenty dollars to boot, and I thirty. We parted, but I could perceive that he had taken a liking to my steed; so I went on. He followed me to the sea beach, about three miles, under pretence of pointing out to me the road; and there, on the sands, amidst the roar of the Atlantic, we finally bargained; and I found myself in possession of a large, well formed and elegant, sorrel horse, that ran off with me at a canter for fifteen miles along the sea shore; and travelled the same day forty-two miles, with nothing but a few mouthfuls of rice straw, which I got from a negro. If you have ever seen the rushes with which carpenters sometimes smooth their work, you may form some idea of the common fare of the South Carolina horse. I found now that I had got a very devil before my chair; the least sound of the whip made him spring half a rod at a leap; no road, however long or heavy, could tame him. Two or three times he had nearly broke my neck, and chair to boot; and at Georgetown ferry he threw one of the boatmen into the river. But he is an excellent traveller, and for that one quality I forgave him all his sins, only keeping a close rein, and a sharp look out. . . .

I should now give you some account of Charleston, with the streets of which I am as well acquainted as I was with those of New York and Boston; but I reserve that till we meet. I shall only say, that the streets cross each other at right angles—are paved on the sides—have a low bed of sand in the middle; and frequently are in a state fit to compare to those of Norfolk. The town, however, is neat—has a gay appearance—is full of shops;

and has a market-place, which far surpasses those of Philadelphia for cleanliness, and is an honour to the city. Many of the buildings have two, three, and four ranges of piazzas, one above another, with a great deal of gingerbread work about them. The streets are crowded with negroes ; and their quarrels often afford amusement to the passengers. In a street called Broad street, I every day see a crowd of wretchedly clad blacks, huddled in a corner for sale : people handling them as they do black cattle. Here are female chimney sweeps ; stalls with roasted sweet potatoes for sale ; and on the wharves clubs of blacks, male and female, sitting round fires, amid heaps of oyster-shells, cooking their victuals—these seem the happiest mortals on earth. The finest groups for a comic painter might every day be found here that any country can produce.

The ladies of Charleston are dressed with taste ; but their pale and languid countenances by no means correspond with their figures. . . .

To-morrow afternoon I shall set off for Savannah. I have collected one hundred and twenty-five subscribers since leaving home.

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† LETTER LXXIII.

'The *ne plus ultra* of my peregrinations'—innkeepers in the Southern States are like vultures—Charleston sadly disappointed—a Scotchman helpful—Dr. D. introduced the 'Ornithology' into the 'Courier'—General Wilkinson 'first-fruits'—Savannah 'bad roads' and floods—advertised in the 'Republican'—homeward.

*To the Same.*

Savannah, March 5, 1809.

DEAR SIR,

I have now reached the *ne plus ultra* of my peregrinations, and shall return home by the first opportunity. Whether this shall be by land or water, depends on circumstances ; if the former, I shall go by Augusta, where I am told twelve or fifteen subscribers may be procured. These, however, would be insufficient to tempt me

that way, for I doubt whether my funds would be sufficient to carry me through.

The innkeepers in the Southern States are like the vultures that hover about their cities, and treat their *guests* as the others do their *carrion* : are as glad to see them, and pick them as bare. The last letter I wrote you was on my arrival in Charleston. I found greater difficulties to surmount there than I had thought of. I solicited several people for a list of names, but that abject and disgraceful listlessness, and want of energy, which have unnerved the whites of all descriptions in these States, put me off from time to time, till at last I was obliged to walk the streets, and pick out those houses, which, from their appearance, indicated wealth and taste in the occupants, and introduce myself. Neither M., Dr. R., nor any other that I applied to, gave me the least encouragement, though they promised, and knew I was a stranger. I was going on in this way, when the keeper of the library, a Scotsman, a good man, whose name had been mentioned to me, made me out a list from the directory ; and among these I spent ten days. The extreme servility, and superabundance of negroes, have ruined the energy and activity of the white population. M. appears to be fast sinking into the same insipidity of character, with a pretty good sprinkling of rapacity. In Charleston, however, I met with some excellent exceptions among the first ranks of society ; and the work excited universal admiration. Dr. D. introduced it very handsomely into the *Courier*. On hearing of General Wilkinson's arrival, I waited on him. He received me with kindness—said he valued the book highly—and paid me the twelve dollars ; on which I took occasion to prognosticate my final success on receiving its *first fruits* from him.

I will not tire you by a recital of the difficulties which I met with between Charleston and Savannah, by bad roads and the extraordinary flood of the river Savannah, where I had nearly lost my horse, he having, by his restiveness, thrown himself overboard ; and, had I not, at great personal risk, rescued him, he might have floated down to Savannah before me.

I arrived here on Tuesday last, and advertised in the *Republican*, the editors of which interested themselves considerably for

me, speaking of my book in their Thursday's paper with much approbation. The expense of advertising in the Southern States is great; but I found it really necessary. I have now seen every person in this place and neighbourhood, of use to be seen. Here I close the list of my subscriptions, obtained at a *price* worth more than five times their amount. But, in spite of a host of difficulties, I have gained my point; and should the work be continued in the style it has been begun, I have no doubt but we may increase the copies to four hundred. I have endeavoured to find persons of respectability in each town, who will receive and deliver the volumes, without recompense, any further than allowing them to make the first selection. By this means the rapacity of *some* booksellers will be avoided.

The weather has been extremely warm these ten days, the thermometer stood in the shade on Friday and Saturday last, at 78° and 79°. I have seen no frost since the 5th of February. The few gardens here are as green and luxuriant as ours are in summer—full of flowering shrubbery, and surrounded with groves of orange trees, fifteen and twenty feet high, loaded with fruit. The streets are deep beds of heavy sand, without the accommodation of a foot pavement. I most sincerely hope that I may be able to return home by water; if not, I shall trouble you with one letter more. . . . .

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† LETTER LXXIV.

'Three months' travelling—'250 subscribers' obtained—Planters 'on the rivers Santee and Pedee'—rice and negroes—new birds—Charleston 'vultures and crows'—ivory-billed Woodpecker alarmed, by its 'baby'-like screaming, the whole of Wilmington—'grasshopper' mistaken for a bird—'Mr. Abbot' of Georgia.

TO MR. WILLIAM BARTRAM,  
Savannah, March 5, 1809.

Three months, my dear friend, are passed since I parted from you in Kingsess. I have been travelling ever since; and one half of my journey is yet to be performed—but that half is homewards,



and through old Neptune's dominions, where I trust I shall not be long detained. This has been the most arduous, expensive, and fatiguing expedition I ever undertook. I have, however, gained my point in procuring two hundred and fifty subscribers, in all, for my Ornithology; and a great mass of information respecting the birds that winter in the Southern States, and some that never visit the Middle States; and this information I have derived personally, and can therefore the more certainly depend upon it. I have, also, found several new birds, of which I can find no account in Linnæus. All these things we will talk over when we meet. . . .

I visited a great number of the rich planters on the rivers Santee and Pedee, and was much struck with the miserable swarms of negroes around them. In these rice plantations, there are great numbers of birds, never supposed to winter so far north, and their tameness surprised me. There are also many here who never visit Pennsylvania. Round Georgetown I also visited several rich planters, all of whom entertained me hospitably. I spent ten days in Charleston, still, in every place where I stopped a day or two, making excursions with my gun.

On the commons, near Charleston, I presided at a singular feast. The company consisted of two hundred and thirty-seven carrion crows (*vultur atratus*), five or six dogs, and myself, though I only kept order, and left the eating part entirely to the others. I sat so near to the dead horse, that my feet touched his, and yet at one time I counted thirty-eight vultures on and within him, so that hardly an inch of his flesh could be seen for them. Linnæus and others have confounded this vulture with the turkey buzzard, but they are two very distinct species.

As far north as Wilmington, in North Carolina, I met with the ivory-billed woodpecker. I killed two, and winged a male, who alarmed the whole town of Wilmington, screaming exactly like a young child crying violently, so that everybody supposed I had a baby under the apron of my chair, till I took out the bird to prevent the people from stopping me. This bird I confined to the room I was to sleep in, and in less than half-an-hour he made his way through the plaster, the lath, and partly through the weather



boards ; and would have escaped, if I had not accidentally come in. The common people confound the *P. principalis* and *P. pileatus* together. . . .

I am utterly at a loss in my wood rambles here, for there are so many trees, plants, shrubs, and insects, that I know nothing of. There are immense quantities of elegant butterflies, and other singular insects. I met with a grasshopper so big that I took it for a bird ; it settles upon trees and bushes. I have kept a record of all the birds which I have seen or shot since I left home.

This journey will be of much use to me, as I have formed acquaintance in almost every place, who are able to transmit me information. Great numbers of our summer birds are already here ; and many are usually here all winter.

There is a Mr. Abbot here, who has resided in Georgia thirty-three years, drawing insects and birds. I have been on several excursions with him. He is a very good observer, and paints well. He has published, in London, one large folio volume of the Lepidopterous insects of Georgia. It is a very splendid work. There is only one vessel here bound to New York ; she sails some time next week, and I shall take my passage in her. I caught a fever here by getting wet ; I hope the sea air, and sea-sickness, will carry it off. . . .

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† LETTER LXXV.

'This bantling book of mine'—now for 'home'—indisposed with fever—Savannah streets 'mere beds of burning sand'—'indolence and dissipation' of the 'wealthy'—Slavery a 'curse'—Two Sisters' Ferry, horse nearly drowned.

*To the Same.*

Savannah, March 8, 1809.

DEAR SIR,

Having now visited all the towns within one hundred miles of the Atlantic, from Maine to Georgia, and done as much for this bantling book of mine as ever author did for any progeny of his brain, I now turn my wishful eye towards home. There is a charm, a melody, in this little word *home*, which only those

know, who have forsaken it to wander among strangers, exposed to dangers, fatigues, insults and impositions, of a thousand nameless kinds. Perhaps I feel the force of this idea rather more at present than usual, being indisposed with a slight fever these three days, which a dose of sea-sickness will, I hope, rid me of. The weather since my arrival in this place has been extremely warm for the season. The wind generally south-west, and the thermometer ranging between  $75^{\circ}$  and  $82^{\circ}$ . To me it feels more intolerable than our summer heat in Philadelphia. The streets of Savannah are also mere beds of burning sand, without even a foot pavement; and until one learns to traverse them with both eyes and mouth shut, both are plentifully filled with showers and whirlwinds of sand. I was longer detained in Charleston than I expected, partly on account of the races, which occupied the minds of all I wished to visit, to the exclusion of every thing else. At nine they were in bed; at ten breakfasting—dressing at eleven—gone out at noon, and not visible again till ten next morning. I met, however, with some excellent exceptions, among the first ranks of society, and my work excited universal admiration. Dr. D. introduced it very handsomely into the *Courier*.

The indolence, want of energy, and dissipation, of the wealthy part of the community in that place, are truly contemptible. The superabundance of negroes in the Southern States has destroyed the activity of the whites. The carpenter, bricklayer, and even the blacksmiths, stand with their hands in their pockets, overlooking their negroes. The planter orders his servant to tell the overseer to see my horse fed and taken care of; the overseer sends another negro to tell the driver to send one of his hands to do it. Before half of this routine is gone through, I have myself unharnessed, rubbed down, and fed my horse. Everything must be done through the agency of these slovenly blacks. . . . These, however, are not one-tenth of the curses slavery has brought on the Southern States. Nothing has surprised me more than the cold, melancholy reserve of the females, of the best families, in South Carolina and Georgia. Old and young, single and married, all have that dull frigid insipidity, and reserve, which is attri-

buted to solitary old maids. Even in their own houses they scarce utter anything to a stranger but yes or no, and one is perpetually puzzled to know whether it proceeds from awkwardness or dislike. Those who have been at some of their Balls say that the ladies hardly even speak or smile, but dance with as much gravity, as if they were performing some ceremony of devotion. On the contrary, the negro wenches are all sprightliness and gayety; and if report be not a defamer—(*here there is a hiatus in the manuscript*) which render the men callous to all the finer sensations of love, and female excellence.

I will not detain you by a recital of my journey from Charleston to Savannah river, at a place called the 'Two Sisters' Ferry; my horse threw himself into the torrent, and had I not, at the risk of my own life, rescued him, would have been drowned. . . .

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† LETTER LXXVI.

David Brown going to Scotland, Vol. I. of 'Ornithology' is sent with him—expenditure on, and hopes and fears—John Finlayson—recollections of the 'Gentle Shepherd'—Duncans at Milestown—a nephew dead—William Mitchell a 'common soldier'—under engagement as assistant-editor of Rees' Cyclopædia—home-friends—Paisley, 'willingly give a hundred dollars to spend a few days' there—David—hopes.

To Mr ALEXANDER WILSON, Paisley.

Philadelphia, June 15, 1809.

DEAR FATHER,

Mr David Brown having informed me of his intention of sailing for Scotland, I have transmitted to you by him the first volume of my American Ornithology, just publishing, and shall, if I live to finish it, send you regularly the remaining nine volumes as they appear. In giving existence to this work, I have expended all I had been saving since my arrival in America. I have also visited every town within 150 miles of the Atlantic coast, from the river St. Lawrence to St. Augustine in Florida, from whence I returned about two months ago. Whether I shall be able to realize a fortune by this publication,

or recover first costs, or suffer the sacrifice of my little all is yet doubtful. I met with a most honourable reception among many of the first characters in the United States, and have collected such a mass of information on this branch of Natural History, as will entitle the work to the merit of originality at least.

I called on John Finlayson yesterday at his rural retreat in a charming hollow, sheltered with apple trees, where "hens on the midden, ducks in dubs are seen," and a clear brook rins *wimplin* by his yard. John is an active, industrious fellow, and much esteemed in his neighbourhood; has a fine family of children, hives of bees, a ewe with three lambs, four looms, and many other comforts and curiosities about him. We went to a neighbouring farmer together, to see a flock of the merino breed of sheep, which are multiplying in the United States beyond all belief. My nephew, W. Duncan, and his brother, have commenced manufacturing at Milestown, with considerable success. Their sister Mary keeps house for them and they live very happily. I have heard nothing of my sister in Genesee these twelve months. I wrote her lately respecting the death of her son George, who fell a victim to the yellow fever three weeks after his arrival in America. He was received into the marine hospital at Norfolk, Virginia, on the 3rd of October, and died on the 5th. I examined the nurse and sexton, and visited the place where the multitude of that year (chiefly strangers,) were buried, and would have placed a humble stone over his grave had it been possible to ascertain the spot.

William Mitchell, formerly of Williamsburgh, who had been supposed dead these several years, is living and in good health at New Orleans—as a common soldier. During my journey through Virginia and the Carolinas, I made every inquiry respecting Bowman, formerly writing-master, but could hear nothing of him. John Rowan still continues in the honourable profession of making bitters, and prescribing in certain disorders. Robert Shaw and family were well last March. Mr. Brown can inform you respecting their situation.

I am still under engagements to Mr. Bradford as assistant editor of the Cyclopædia. This, with the Ornithology, and other occa-

sional things in the poetical way, keep me from the sin of idleness, from which I have been pretty well preserved for these 15 years. Joseph Roger died about ten months ago in Schenectady—I saw his widow there in October last. I could have wished to have seen William Morrison and Nelly, but my time would not permit. Thomas Wotherspoon, once my most particular friend and companion, has, I suppose, altogether forgot me,—remember my respects to Jean and him. I shall most probably never see either them, or any of my friends, or Paisley, more—but

While remembrance' power remains,  
Those native scenes shall meet my view;  
Dear—long lost friends!—on foreign plains  
I'll sigh, and shed a tear for you.

All my relations in and about Philadelphia are well. I should be happy to hear from John Bell and Jean, and would willingly give a hundred dollars to spend a few days with you all in Paisley, but like a true bird of passage, I would again wing my way across the western waste of waters, to the peaceful and happy regions of America.

What has become of David that I never hear from him? Let me know, my dear father, how you live, and how you enjoy your health at your advanced age. I trust the publication I have now commenced, and which has procured for me reputation and respect, will also enable me to contribute to your independence and comfort, in return for what I owe to you. To my stepmother, sisters, brothers, and friends, I beg to remembered affectionately,

Your grateful son,

ALEX. WILSON.

## † LETTER LXXVII.

The second volume of 'American Ornithology' now ready for the press—birds on which more information is wished—it has fallen to my lot to be the biographer of the feathered tribes of the United States'—'solicitous to do full justice to every species'—not 'one cent' gained on the work—'Cowpena bird'—foreign news.

TO MR WILLIAM BARTRAM.

Philadelphia, August 4, 1809.

The second volume of "American Ornithology" being now nearly ready to go to press, and the plates in considerable forwardness, you will permit me to trespass on your time, for a few moments, by inquiring if you have anything interesting to add to the history of the following birds, the figures of which will be found in this volume. . . .

I have already said everything of the foregoing that my own observations suggested, or that I have been enabled to collect from those on whom I could rely. As it has fallen to my lot to be the biographer of the feathered tribes of the United States, I am solicitous to do full justice to every species; and I would not conceal one good quality that any one of them possesses. I have paid particular attention to the mocking-bird, humming-bird, king-bird and cat-bird; all the principal traits in their character I have delineated in full. If you have anything to add on either of them, I wish you would communicate it in the form of a letter, addressed particularly to me. Your favourable opinion of my work (if such you have) would, if publicly known, be of infinite service to me, and procure me many friends.

I assure you, my dear friend, that this undertaking has involved me in many difficulties and expenses which I never dreamt of; and I have never yet received one cent from it. I am, therefore, a volunteer in the cause of Natural History, impelled by nobler views than those of money. The second volume will be ready for delivery on the first of January next. I have received communications from many different parts of the United States, with some drawings, and offers of more. But these are rarely



executed with such precision as is necessary for a work of this kind.

Let me know if you have ever seen the nest of Catesby's *cowpen-bird*. I have every reason to believe that this bird never builds itself a nest, but, like the cuckoo of Europe, drops its eggs into the nests of other birds, and leaves the result to their mercy and management. I have found no less than six nests this season, with each a young cow-bird contained in it. One of these, which I had found in the nest of the Maryland yellow-throat, and which occupied the whole nest, I brought home, and put it into the cage of a crested red-bird, who became its foster father, and fed, and reared it, with great affection. It begins to chant a little.

I have just heard from our old friend M. He has not yet published the first number of his work; and Bonaparte has been so busy with cutting throats, and building bridges, in the forests of Austria, that the *Inspector of the Forests of France* has not yet received his appointment. . . . .

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† LETTER LXXVIII.

Thanks for a bird—the 'sora' in the rice-flats of Savannah—'reed-birds' or 'rice-birds'—'snow-bird' of the Great Swamp build their nests among the long grass.

*To the Same,*

October 11, 1809.

. . . . Thanks for your bird, so neatly stuffed, that I was just about to skin it. It is the *Rallus virginianus* of Turton, and agrees exactly with his description. The one in company was probably the female. Turton mentions four species as inhabitants of the United States. I myself have seen six. Mr. Abbot of Savannah showed me two species. I found the *sora*, as the Virginians call it, in the rice flats near Savannah, in March. General Wilkinson told me that the *sora* was in multitudes at Detroit. Query—don't you think they breed in the north, like the rice-birds? Are not the European naturalists mistaken in saying that the reed-birds or rice-birds pass *from* the Island of Cuba, in September, to Carolina? All the Spaniards with whom I have conversed, say that these birds are seen in Cuba, early in the Spring

only, and again in October. And the people of the district of Maine, of all the New England States, and those who have lived on the river Illinois, declare that these birds breed there in vast numbers.

I have many times been told that our small snow-bird (*fringilla hudsonia*) breeds in the Great Swamp, which I can hardly believe. When I was in Williamsburg, Virginia, Bishop Madison told me of a mountain, in the interior of that State, where they bred in multitudes. I have lately had the most positive assurances from a gentleman who lived on the ranges of the Alleghenny, about two hundred and fifty miles distant, that he saw them there four months ago; and that they built their nests almost every where among long grass. He said he took particular notice of them, as he had heard it said down here, that they changed to chipping sparrows in summer. What think you of these matters? . . .

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† LETTER LXXIX.

'Proposed journey'—decided to go 'on foot'—'a dollar a-day'—companionship.

*To the Same.*

Philadelphia, Nov. 11, 1809.

DEAR SIR,

Since I parted from you yesterday evening, I have ruminated a great deal on my proposed journey; I have considered the advantages and disadvantages of the three modes of proceeding: on horseback—in the stage-coach, and on foot. Taking everything into view, I have at length determined to adopt the last, as being the cheapest, the best adapted for examining the country we pass through; the most favourable to health; and, in short, except for its fatigues, the best mode for a scientific traveller or naturalist, in every point of view. I have also thought that by this determination I will be so happy as to secure your company, for which I would willingly sustain as much hardship, and as many deprivations, as I am able to bear.

If this determination should meet your approbation, and if you

are willing to encounter the hardships of such a pedestrian journey, let me know as soon as is convenient. I think one dollar a day, each, will be fully sufficient for our expenses, by a strict regard, at all times, to economy. . . .

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† LETTER LXXX.

'Ornithological pilgrimage'—Lancaster 'governor' subscriber—a 'political mob'—Susquehannah—York 'literati'—'a very extraordinary character'—Dr. Muhlenberg—a 'certain judge' and blockhead—Chambersburg—Carlisle—Alleghany mountains—wild scenery—Pittsburg—'country beyond the Ohio'—'19 names' obtained—'small skiff' called 'The Ornithologist'—on to Cincinnati—'Farewell! God bless you.'

*To Mr. ALEXANDER LAWSON.*

Pittsburgh, February 22d, 1810.

DEAR SIR,

From this first stage of my Ornithological pilgrimage, I sit down, with pleasure, to give you some account of my adventures since we parted. On arriving at Lancaster, I waited on the governor, secretary of State, and such other great folks as were likely to be useful to me. The governor received me with civility, passed some good-natured compliments on the volumes, and readily added his name to my list. He seems an active man, of plain good sense, and little ceremony. By Mr. L. I was introduced to many members of both Houses, but I found them, in general, such a pitiful, squabbling, political mob; so split up, and justling about the mere formalities of legislation, without knowing any thing of its realities, that I abandoned them in disgust. I must, however, except from this censure a few intelligent individuals, friends to science, and possessed of taste, who treated me with great kindness. On Friday evening I set out for Columbia, where I spent one day in vain. I crossed the Susquehannah on Sunday forenoon, with some difficulty, having to cut our way through the ice for several hundred yards; and passing on to York, paid my respects to all the literati of that place without success. Five miles north of this town lives a very extraordinary character, between eighty and

ninety years of age, who has lived by trapping birds and quadrupeds these thirty years. Dr. F. carried me out in a sleigh to see him, and presented me with a tolerably good full length figure of him ; he has also promised to transmit to me such a collection of facts relative to this singular original, as will enable me to draw up an interesting narrative of him for the *Port Folio*. I carried him half a pound of snuff, of which he is insatiably fond, taking it by handfuls. I was much diverted with the astonishment he expressed on looking at the plates of my work—he could tell me anecdotes of the greater part of the subjects of the first volume, and some of the second. One of his traps, which he says he invented himself, is remarkable for ingenuity, and extremely simple. Having a letter from Dr. Muhlenberg to a clergyman in Hanover, I passed on through a well-cultivated country, chiefly inhabited by Germans, to that place, where a certain Judge took upon himself to say, that such a book as mine ought not to be encouraged, as it was not within the reach of the commonality ; and therefore inconsistent with our republican institutions ! By the same mode of reasoning, which I did not dispute, I undertook to prove him a greater culprit than myself, in erecting a large, elegant, three-story brick house, so much beyond the reach of the commonality, as he called them, and consequently grossly contrary to our republican institutions. I harangued this Solomon of the Bench more seriously afterwards, pointing out to him the great influence of science on a young rising nation like ours, and particularly the science of Natural History, till he began to show such symptoms of intellect, as to seem ashamed of what he said.

From Hanover I passed through a thinly-inhabited country ; and crossing the North Mountain, at a pass called Newman's Gap, arrived at Chambersburgh, whence I next morning returned to Carlisle, to visit the reverend doctors of the college. . . .

The towns of Chambersburgh and Shippensburgh produced me nothing. On Sunday, the 11th, I left the former of these places in the stage coach ; and in fifteen miles began to ascend the Alpine regions of the Alleghany mountains, where above, around, and below us, nothing appeared but prodigious declivities, covered with woods ; and, the weather being fine, such a profound silence

prevailed among these aerial solitudes, as impressed the soul with awe, and a kind of fearful sublimity. Something of this arose from my being alone, having left the coach several miles below. These high ranges continued for more than one hundred miles to Greensburgh, thirty-two miles from Pittsburgh; thence the country is nothing but an assemblage of steep hills, and deep vallies, descending rapidly till you reach within seven miles of this place, where I arrived on the 15th instant. We were within two miles of Pittsburgh, when suddenly the road descends a long and very steep hill, where the Alleghany river is seen at hand, on the right, stretching along a rich bottom, and bounded by a high ridge of hills on the west. After following this road, parallel with the river, and about a quarter of a mile from it, through a rich low valley, a cloud of black smoke, at its extremity, announced the town of Pittsburgh. On arriving at the town, which stands on a low flat, and looks like a collection of Blacksmith's shops, Glass-houses, Breweries, Forges and Furnaces, the Monongahela opened to the view, on the left, running along the bottom of a range of hills so high that the sun, at this season, sets to the town of Pittsburgh at a little past four: this range continues along the Ohio as far as the view reaches. The ice had just begun to give way in the Monongahela, and came down in vast bodies for the three following days. It has now begun in the Alleghany, and, at the moment I write, the river presents a white mass of rushing ice.

The country beyond Ohio, to the west, appears a mountainous and hilly region. The Monongahela is lined with arks, usually called Kentucky-boats, waiting for the rising of the river, and the absence of the ice, to descend. A perspective view of the town of Pittsburgh at this season, with the numerous arks and covered keel boats preparing to descend the Ohio; its hills, its great rivers—the pillars of smoke rising from its furnaces and glass-works—would make a noble picture. I began a very diligent search in this place, the day after my arrival, for subscribers, and continued it for four days. I succeeded beyond expectation, having got nineteen names of the most wealthy and respectable part of the inhabitants. The industry of Pittsburgh is remarkable; everybody you see is busy; and as a proof of the prosperity of the place, an emi-

ment lawyer told me that there has not been one suit instituted against a merchant of the town these three years. . . .

Gentlemen here assure me that the road to Chilicothe is impassable on foot by reason of the freshes. I have therefore resolved to navigate myself a small skiff, which I have bought, and named the ORNITHOLOGIST, down to Cincinnati, a distance of five hundred and twenty-eight miles ; intending to visit five or six towns that lie in my way. From Cincinnati I will cross over to the opposite shore, and, abandoning my boat, make my way to Lexington, where I expect to be ere your letter can reach that place. Were I to go by Chilicothe, I should miss five towns, as large as it. Some say that I ought not to attempt going down by myself—others think I may. I am determined to make the experiment, the expense of hiring a rower being considerable. As soon as the ice clears out of the Alleghany, and the weather will permit, I shall shove off, having everything in readiness. I have ransacked the woods and fields here without finding a single bird new to me, or indeed any thing but a few snow-birds and sparrows. I expect to have something interesting to communicate in my next. . . .

My friends will please accept through you my best wishes and kindest respects : and I regret that while the grand spectacle of mountains, regions of expanded forests, glittering towns, and noble rivers, are passing in rapid succession before my delighted view, they are not beside me to enjoy the varying scenery ; but as far as my pen will enable me, I will freely share it with them, and remember them affectionately until I forget myself.

February 23d. My baggage is on board—I have just to despatch this and set off. The weather is fine, and I have no doubt of piloting my skiff in safety to Cincinnati. Farewell. God bless you !



## † LETTER LXXXI.

'Second stage of bird-catching expedition'—skiff-voyage down the Ohio—'whistling of the Red-bird'—forest-scenery—sugar-camps—'arks' on the river—description and drawings—'twenty miles the first spell'—'brush-heap'—lonely—'moored safely in Bear-Grass Creek at the Rapids of the Ohio'—various friends in various places—Marietta 'Indian fortifications'—Big-Grave Creek—examined—Mr. Tomlinson 'no antiquary'—Michael Cressap—'Logan's accusation'—'merinoes' at Marietta—the Muskingum—Blannerhasset's Island—Galliopolis and Sandy River—Sciota, 'flock of paroquets'—a great storm—'bear-treering,' &c.—the 'first order of American architecture'—'miserable huts' in grand woods—the Scotch fiddle! (itch)—Salt Lick—Maysville—on foot to Washington—petrified shells—hemp—Cincinnati, 'old Roman'—description of—Fort Washington—Judge Turner—'Indian mound'—Great Miami—Big-Bone Creek—'American elephants and mammoths'—Swiss settlement—the vine—Kentucky river—rain and tempest—a 'wretched hovel' and its 'meagre, diminutive' owner—anecdotes and description of—'turkies'—'suction of the Falls'—sold skiff 'Ornithologist'—'droll name—some old chief or warrior'—Shippingport—Falls of Oswego—Louisville—Lexington, 'on foot' for '72 miles'—Indian corn—'pigeon-roost'—poetical narrative 'The Pilgrim.'

*To the Same,*

Lexington, April 4, 1810.

MY DEAR SIR,

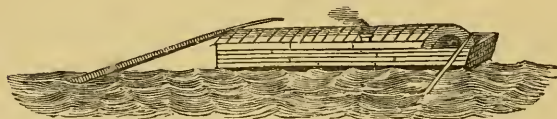
Having now reached the second stage of my bird-catching expedition, I willingly sit down to give you some account of my adventures and remarks since leaving Pittsburgh; by the aid of a good map, and your usual stock of patience, you will be able to listen to my story, and trace all my wanderings. Though generally dissuaded from venturing by myself on so long a voyage down the Ohio in an open skiff, I considered this mode, with all its inconveniences, as the most favourable to my researches and the most suitable to my funds, and I determined accordingly. Two days before my departure, the Alleghany river was one wide torrent of broken ice, and I calculated on experiencing considerable difficulties on this score. My stock of provisions consisted of some biscuit and cheese, and a bottle of cordial presented me by a gen-

tleman of Pittsburgh ; my gun, trunk, and great-coat, occupied one end of the boat ; I had a small tin occasionally to bale her, and to take my beverage from the Ohio with ; and bidding adieu to the smoky confines of Pittsburgh, I launched into the stream, and soon winded away among the hills that every where enclose this noble river. The weather was warm and serene, and the river like a mirror except where floating masses of ice spotted its surface, and which required some care to steer clear of ; but these to my surprise, in less than a day's sailing, totally disappeared. Far from being concerned at my new situation, I felt my heart expand with joy at the novelties which surrounded me ; I listened with pleasure to the whistling of the Red-bird on the banks as I passed, and contemplated the forest scenery as it receded, with increasing delight. The smoke of the numerous sugar camps, rising lazily among the mountains, gave great effect to the varying landscape ; and the grotesque log-cabins, that here and there opened from the woods, were diminished into mere dog-houses by the sublimity of the impending mountains. If you suppose to yourself two parallel ranges of forest-covered hills, whose irregular summits are seldom more than three or four miles apart, winding through an immense extent of country, and enclosing a river half a mile wide, which alternately washes the steep declivity on one side, and laves a rich flat forest-clad bottom on the other, of a mile or so in breadth, you will have a pretty correct idea of the appearance of the Ohio. The banks of these rich flats are from twenty to sixty and eighty feet high, and even these last were within a few feet of being overflowed in December, 1808.

I now stripped, with alacrity, to my new avocation. The current went about two and a half miles an hour, and I added about three and a half miles more to the boat's way with my oars. In the course of the day I passed a number of arks, or, as they are usually called, Kentucky boats, loaded, with what it must be acknowledged are the most valuable commodities of a country ; viz. men, women and children, horses and ploughs, flour, millstones, &c. Several of these floating caravans were loaded with store goods for the supply of the settlements through which they passed, having a counter erected, shawls, muslins, &c. displayed, and every thing

ready for transacting business. On approaching a settlement they blow a horn or tin trumpet, which announces to the inhabitants their arrival. I boarded many of these arks, and felt much interested at the sight of so many human beings, migrating like birds of passage to the luxuriant regions of the south and west. The arks are built in the form of a parallelogram, being from twelve to fourteen feet wide, and from forty to seventy feet long, covered above, rowed only occasionally by two oars before, and steered by a long and powerful one fixed above, as in the annexed sketch.

ARK.



BARGE FOR PASSING UP STREAM.



The barges are taken up along shore by setting poles, at the rate of twenty miles or so a day; the arks cost about one hundred and fifty cents per foot, according to their length; and when they reach their places of destination, seldom bring more than one-sixth their original cost. These arks descend from all parts of the Ohio and its tributary streams, the Alleghany, Monongahela, Muskingum, Sciota, Miami, Kentucky, Wabash, &c., in the months of March, April, and May particularly, with goods, produce and emigrants, the two former for markets along the river, or at New Orleans, the latter for various parts of Kentucky, Ohio, and the Indiana Territory. I now return to my own expedition. I rowed twenty odd miles the first spell, and found I should be able to stand it

perfectly well. About an hour after night I put up at a miserable cabin, fifty-two miles from Pittsburgh, where I slept on what I supposed to be corn-stalks, or something worse ; so preferring the smooth bosom of the Ohio to this brush heap, I got up long before day, and, being under no apprehension of losing my way, I again pushed out into the stream. The landscape on each side lay in one mass of shade, but the grandeur of the projecting headlands and vanishing points, or lines, was charmingly reflected in the smooth glassy surface below. I could only discover when I was passing a clearing, by the crowing of cocks ; and now and then, in more solitary places, the big-horned owl made a most hideous hollowing, that echoed among the mountains. In this lonesome manner, with full leisure for observation and reflection, exposed to hardships all day, and hard berths all night, to storms of rain, hail and snow, for it froze severely almost every night, I persevered from the 24th of February to Sunday evening, March 17th, when I moored my skiff safely in Bear-Grass Creek, at the Rapids of the Ohio, after a voyage of seven hundred and twenty miles. My hands suffered the most ; and it will be some weeks yet before they recover their former feeling and flexibility. It would be the task of a month to detail all the particulars of my numerous excursions, in every direction from the river. In Steubenville, Charlestown and Wheeling, I found some friends. At Marietta I visited the celebrated remains of Indian fortifications, as they are improperly called, which cover a large space of ground on the banks of the Muskingum. Seventy miles above this, at a place called Big-Grave Creek, I examined some extraordinary remains of the same kind there. The Big Grave is three hundred paces round at the base, seventy feet perpendicular, and the top, which is about fifty feet over, has sunk in, forming a regular concavity, three or four feet deep. This tumulus is in the form of a cone, and the whole, as well as its immediate neighbourhood, is covered with a venerable growth of forest, four or five hundred years old, which gives it a most singular appearance. In clambering around its steep sides, I found a place where a large white oak had been lately blown down, and had torn up the earth to the depth of five or six feet. In this place I commenced digging, and continued to la-

hour for about an hour, examining every handful of earth with great care, but except some shreds of earthen ware, made of a coarse kind of gritty clay, and considerable pieces of charcoal, I found nothing else ; but a person of the neighbourhood presented me with some beads, fashioned out of a kind of white stone, which were found in digging on the opposite side of this gigantic mound, where I found the hole still remaining. The whole of an extensive plain a short distance from this is marked out with squares, oblongs and circles, one of which comprehends several acres. The embankments by which they are distinguished are still two or three feet above the common level of the field. The Big Grave is the property of a Mr. Tomlinson, or Tumblestone, who lives near, and who would not expend three cents to see the whole sifted before his face. I endeavoured to work on his avarice, by representing the probability that it might contain valuable matters, and suggested to him a mode by which a passage might be cut into it level with the bottom, and by excavation and arching, a most noble cellar might be formed for keeping his turnips and potatoes. "All the turnips and potatoes I shall raise this dozen years," said he, "would not pay the expense." This man is no antiquary, or theoretical farmer, nor much of a practical one either I fear ; he has about two thousand acres of the best land, and just makes out to live. Near the head of what is called the Long Reach, I called on a certain Michael Cressap, son to the noted Colonel Cressap, mentioned in Jefferson's Notes on Virginia. From him I received the head of a Paddle fish, the largest ever seen in the Ohio, which I am keeping for Mr. Peale, with various other curiosities. I took the liberty of asking whether Logan's accusation of his father having killed all his family, had any truth in it ; but he replied that it had not. Logan, he said, had been misinformed ; he detailed to me all the particulars, which are too long for repetition, and concluded by informing me that his father died early in the revolutionary war, of the camp fever, near New York.

Marietta stands on a swampy plain, which has evidently once been the ancient bed of the Muskingum, and is still occasionally inundated to the depth of five or six feet. A Mr. Putnam, son to the old general of Bunker's Hill memory, and Mr. Gilman and



Mr. Fearing, are making great exertions here, in introducing and multiplying the race of merinos. The two latter gentlemen are about establishing works by steam, for carding and spinning wool, and intend to carry on the manufacture of broadcloth extensively. Mr. Gillman is a gentleman of taste and wealth, and has no doubts of succeeding. Something is necessary to give animation to this place, for since the building of ships has been abandoned here, the place seems on the decline.

The current of the Muskingum is very rapid, and the ferry boat is navigated across in the following manner. A strong cable is extended from bank to bank, forty or fifty feet above the surface of the river, and fastened tight at each end. On this cable are two loose running blocks; one rope from the bow of the boat is fastened to the first of these blocks, and another from the after part of the boat to the second block, and by lengthening this last a diagonal direction is given to the boat's head, a little up stream, and the current striking forcibly and obliquely on her aft, she is hurried forward with amazing velocity without any manual labour whatever. I passed Blannerhasset's island after night, but the people were burning brush, and by the light I had a distinct view of the mansion house, which is but a plain frame of no great dimensions. It is now the property of a Mr. Miller from Lexington, who intends laying it chiefly in hemp. It is nearly three miles long, and contains about three hundred acres, half of which is in cultivation; but like all the rest of the numerous islands of the Ohio, is subject to inundations. At Gallipolis, which stands upon a high plain, and contains forty or fifty scattered houses, I found the fields well fenced and well cultivated, peach and apple orchards numerous, and a considerable appearance of industry. One half of the original French settlers have removed to a tract of land opposite to the mouth of Sandy River. This town has one shop and two taverns; the mountains press in to within a short distance of the town. I found here another Indian mound planted with peach trees. On Monday, March 5th, about ten miles below the mouth of the great Sciota, where I saw the first flock of parquets, I encountered a violent storm of wind and rain, which changed to hail and snow, blowing down trees and shrubs in all



directions ; so that for immediate preservation I was obliged to steer out into the river, which rolled and foamed like a sea, and filled my boat nearly half full of water ; and it was with the greatest difficulty I could make the least headway. It continued to snow violently until dusk, when I at length made good my landing at a place on the Kentucky shore, where I had perceived a cabin ; and here I spent the evening in learning the art and mystery of bear-treeing, wolf-trapping, and wild-cat hunting, from an old professor. But notwithstanding the skill of the great-master, the country here is swarming with wolves and wild-cats, black and brown ; according to this hunter's own confession he had lost sixty pigs from Christmas last, and all night long the distant howling of the wolves kept the dogs in a perpetual uproar of barking. This man was one of those people called squatters, who neither pay rent nor own land, but keep roving on the frontiers, advancing as the tide of civilized population approaches. They are the immediate successors of the savages, and far below them in good sense and good manners, as well as comfortable accommodation. An engraved representation of one of their cabins would form a striking embellishment to the pages of the *Port Folio*, as a specimen of the first order of American Architecture.

Nothing adds more to the savage grandeur, and picturesque effect, of the scenery along the Ohio, than these miserable huts of human beings, lurking at the bottom of a gigantic growth of timber, that I have not seen equalled in any other part of the United States. And it is truly amusing to observe how dear and how familiar habit has rendered those privations, which must have been first the offspring of necessity. Yet none pride themselves more on their possessions. The inhabitants of these forlorn sheds will talk to you with pride of the richness of their soil, of the excellence and abundance of their country, of the healthiness of their climate, and the purity of their waters ; while the only bread you find among them is of Indian corn, coarsely ground in a horse-mill, with half of the grains unbroken ; even their cattle are destitute of stables and hay, and look like moving skeletons ; their own houses worse than pig-sties ; their clothes an assemblage of rags ; their faces yellow, and lank with disease ; and their persons covered

with filth, and frequently garnished with the humours of the Scotch fiddle ; from which dreadful disease, by the mercy of God, I have been most miraculously preserved. All this is the effect of laziness. The corn is thrown into the ground in the Spring, and the pigs turned into the woods, where they multiply like rabbits. The labour of the squatter, is now over till Autumn, and he spends the Winter in eating pork, cabbage, and hoe-cakes. What a contrast to the neat farm, and snug cleanly habitation, of the industrious settler, that opens his green fields, his stately barns, gardens and orchards, to the gladdened eye of the delighted stranger !

At a place called Salt Lick I went ashore to see the salt-works, and to learn whether the people had found any further remains of an animal of the ox kind, one of whose horns, of a prodigious size, was discovered here some years ago, and is in the possession of Mr. Peale. They make here about one thousand bushels weekly, which sells at one dollar and seventy-five cents per bushel. The wells are from thirty to fifty feet deep, but nothing curious has lately been dug up. I landed at Maysville, or Limestone, where a considerable deal of business is done in importation for the interior of Kentucky. It stands on a high, narrow plain between the mountains and the river, which is fast devouring the bank, and encroaching on the town ; part of the front street is gone already, and unless some effectual means are soon taken, the whole must go by piecemeal. This town contains about one hundred houses, chiefly log and frames. From this place I set out on foot for Washington. On the road, at the height of several hundred feet above the present surface of the river, I found prodigious quantities of petrified shells, of the small cockle and fan-shaped kind, but whether marine remains or not am uncertain. I have since found these petrified concretions of shells universal all over Kentucky, wherever I have been. The rocks look as if one had collected heaps of broken shells, and wrought them up among clay, then hardened it into stone. These rocks lie universally in horizontal strata. A farmer in the neighbourhood of Washington assured me, that from seven acres he reaped at once eight thousand weight of excellent hemp, fit for market.

Amidst very tempestuous weather I reached the town of Cincinnati, which does honour to the name of the old Roman, and is the neatest and handsomest situated place I have seen since I left Philadelphia. You must know that during an unknown series of ages, the river Ohio has gradually sunk several hundred feet below its former bed, and has left on both sides, occasionally, what are called the first or nearest, and the second or next, high bank, the latter of which is never overflowed.

The town of Cincinnati occupies two beautiful plains, one on the first, and the other on the second bank, and contains upwards of five hundred houses, the greater proportion of which are of brick. One block-house is all that remains of Fort Washington. The river Licking comes in from the opposite shore, where the town of Newport, of forty or fifty houses, and a large arsenal and barracks, are lately erected. Here I met with Judge Turner, a man of extraordinary talents, well known to the literati of Philadelphia. He exerted himself in my behalf with all the ardour of an old friend. A large Indian mound in the vicinity of this town has been lately opened by Doctor Drake, who showed me the collection of curiosities which had been found in that and others. In the centre of this mound he also found a large fragment of earthen ware, such as I found at the Big Grave, which is a pretty strong proof that these works had been erected by a people, if not the same, differing little from the present race of Indians, whose fragments of earthen ware, dug up about their late towns, correspond exactly with these. Twenty miles below this I passed the mouth of the Great Miami, which rushes in from the north, and is a large and stately river, preserving its pure waters uncontaminated for many miles with those of the Ohio, each keeping their respective sides of the channel. I rambled up the banks of this river for four or five miles, and in my return shot a turkey. I also saw five or six deer in a drove, but they were too light-heeled for me.

In the afternoon of the 15th I entered Big-Bone Creek, which being passable only about a quarter of a mile, I secured my boat, and left my baggage under the care of a decent family near, and set out on foot five miles through the woods for the Big-bone Lick, that great antediluvian rendezvous of the American elephants.

This place, which lies "far in the windings of a sheltered vale," afforded me a fund of amusement in shooting ducks and paroquets, (of which last I skinned twelve, and brought off two slightly wounded,) and in examining the ancient buffalo roads to this great licking-place. Mr. Colquhoun, the proprietor, was not at home, but his agent and manager entertained me as well as he was able, and was much amused with my enthusiasm. This place is a low valley, everywhere surrounded by high hills; in the centre, by the side of the creek, is a quagmire of near an acre, from which, and another smaller one below, the chief part of these large bones have been taken; at the latter places I found numerous fragments of large bones lying scattered about. In pursuing a wounded duck across this quagmire, I had nearly deposited my carcass among the grand congregation of mammoths below, having sunk up to the middle, and had hard struggling to get out. As the proprietor intends to dig in various places this season for brine, and is a gentleman of education and intelligence, I have strong hopes that a more complete skeleton of that animal called the mammoth, than has yet been found, will be procured. I laid the strongest injunction on the manager to be on the look-out, and to preserve every thing; I also left a letter for Mr. Colquhoun to the same purport, and am persuaded that these will not be neglected. In this neighbourhood I found the Columbo plant in great abundance, and collected some of the seeds. Many of the old stalks were more than five feet high. I have since found it in various other parts of this country. In the afternoon of the next day I returned to my boat, replaced my baggage, and rowed twenty miles to the Swiss settlement, where I spent the night. These hardy and industrious people have now twelve acres closely and cleanly planted with vines from the Cape of Good Hope. They last year made seven hundred gallons of wine, and expect to make three times as much the ensuing season. The houses are neat and comfortable, they have orchards of peach and apple trees, besides a great number of figs, cherries, and other fruits, of which they are very curious. They are of opinion that this part of the Indian Territory is as well suited as any part of France to the cultivation of the vine, but the

vines they say require different management here from what they were accustomed to in Switzerland. I purchased a bottle of their last vintage, and drunk to all your healths as long as it lasted, in going down the river. Seven miles below this I passed the mouth of Kentucky river, which has a formidable appearance. I observed twenty or thirty scattered houses on its upper side, and a few below, many of the former seemingly in a state of decay. It rained on me the whole of this day, and I was obliged to row hard and drink healths to keep myself comfortable. My birds' skins were wrapt up in my great coat, and my own skin had to sustain a complete drenching, which, however, had no bad effects. This evening I lodged at the most wretched hovel I had yet seen. The owner, a meagre diminutive wretch, soon began to let me know of how much consequence he had formerly been ; that he had gone through all the war with General Washington—had become one of his life-guards, and had sent many a British soldier to his long home. As I answered him with indifference, to interest me the more he began to detail anecdotes of his wonderful exploits ; “One Grenadier,” said he, “had the impudence to get up on the works, and to wave his cap in defiance ; my commander [General Washington I suppose] says to me, “Dick, says he, can't you pepper that there fellow for me ?” says he. “Please your honour, says I, I'll try at it ; so I took a fair, cool and steady aim, and touched my trigger. Up went his heels like a turkey ! down he tumbled ! one buckshot had entered here, and another here, [laying a finger on each breast] and the bullet found the way to his brains right through his forehead. By God he was a noble looking fellow !” Though I believed every word of this to be a lie, yet I could not but look with disgust on the being who uttered it. The same miscreant pronounced a long prayer before supper, and immediately after called out, in a splutter of oaths, for the pine splinters to be held to let the gentleman see. Such a farrago of lies, oaths, prayers, and politeness, put me in a good humour in spite of myself. The whole herd of this filthy kennel were in perpetual motion with the itch ; so having procured a large fire to be made, under pretence of habit I sought for the softest plank, placed my trunk and great coat at my head, and stretched myself



there till morning. I set out early and passed several arks. A number of turkeys which I observed from time to time on the Indiana shore, made me lose half the morning in search of them. On the Kentucky shore I was also decoyed by the same temptations, but never could approach near enough to shoot one of them. These affairs detained me so, that I was dubious whether I should be able to reach Louisville that night. Night came on, and I could hear nothing of the Falls; about eight I first heard the roaring of the Rapids, and as it increased I was every moment in hopes of seeing the lights of Louisville; but no lights appeared, and the noise seemed now within less than half a mile of me. Seriously alarmed, lest I might be drawn into the suction of the Falls, I cautiously coasted along shore, which was full of snags and sawyers, and at length with great satisfaction, opened Bear-Grass Creek, where I secured my skiff to a Kentucky boat, and loading myself with my baggage, I groped my way through a swamp up to the town. The next day I sold my skiff for exactly half what it cost me; and the man who bought it wondered why I gave it such a droll Indian name, (the *Ornithologist*) "some old chief or warrior I suppose," said he. This day I walked down along shore to Shippingport, to take a view of those celebrated Rapids, but they fell far short of my expectation. I should have no hesitation in going down them in a skiff. The Falls of Oswego, in the state of New York, though on a smaller scale, are far more dangerous and formidable in appearance. Though the river was not high, I observed two arks and a barge run them with great ease and rapidity. The Ohio here is something more than a mile wide, with several islands interspersed; the channel rocky, and the islands heaped with drift wood. The whole fall in two miles is less than twenty-four feet. The town of Louisville stands on a high second bank, and is as large as Frankfort, having a number of good brick buildings and valuable shops. The situation would be as healthy as any on the river, but for the numerous swamps and ponds that intersect the woods in its neighbourhood. These from their height above the river might all be drained and turned into cultivation; but every man here is so intent on making



of money, that they have neither time nor disposition for improvements, even where the article health is at stake. A man here told me that last Fall he had fourteen sick in his own family. On Friday the 24th, I left my baggage with a merchant of the place to be forwarded by the first wagon, and passed through Middletown and Shelbyville, both inconsiderable places. Nine-tenths of the country is in forest ; the surface undulating into gentle eminences and declivities, between each of which generally runs a brook, over loose flags of limestone. The soil, by appearance, is of the richest sort. I observed immense fields of Indian corn, high excellent fences, few grain fields, many log houses; and those of the meaner sort. I took notice of few apple orchards, but several very thriving, peach ones. An appearance of slovenliness is but too general about their houses, barns, and barn-yards. Negroes are numerous ; cattle and horses lean, particularly the former, who appear as if struggling with starvation for their existence. The woods are swarming with pigs, pigeons, squirrels and woodpeckers. The pigs are universally fat, owing to the great quantity of mast this year. Walking here in wet weather is most execrable, and is like travelling on soft soap ; a few days of warm weather hardens this again almost into stone. Want of bridges is the greatest inconvenience to a foot-traveller here. Between Shelbyville and Frankfort, having gone out of my way to see a pigeon roost, (which by the by is the greatest curiosity I have seen since leaving home) I waded a deep creek called Benson, nine or ten times. I spent several days in Frankfort, and in rambling among the stupendous cliffs of Kentucky river. On Thursday evening I entered Lexington. But I cannot do justice to these subjects at the conclusion of a letter, which, in spite of all my abridgments, has far exceeded in length what I first intended. My next will be from Nashville. I shall then have seen a large range of Kentucky, and be more able to give you a correct delineation of the country and its inhabitants. In descending the Ohio, I amused myself with a poetical narrative of my expedition, which I called "The Pilgrim," an extract from which shall close this long, and I am afraid tiresome letter. . . .

## † LETTER LXXXII.

'Through the wilderness to Natchez'—Lexington—description—pillory—Court-House—judges 'like spiders in a window corner'—horses of Kentucky—'plain homespun'—no 'bigotry'—amusing sketches—a 'good time coming'—Nicholasville—woods covered with 'rotten leaves' and 'dead timber'—descended 'a long, steep, and rocky declivity'—Dick's river—Danville—woody 'wonders'—Mulder's Hill 'family caravans'—description—pigeon-roost for three miles—Green river—Choctaws—Little Barren—scrub—account of a cave—bats—saltpetre—bark mockasin'—'luxuriant fields of corn'—want of water—Bowling Green—caves 'suspicious'—an adventure and anecdote—Mansker's Creek—Cumberland—new birds—Nashville—kind friends.

*To the Same.*

Nashville, Tennessee, April 28th, 1810.

MY DEAR SIR,

Before setting out on my journey through the wilderness to Natchez, I sit down to give you, according to promise, some account of Lexington, and of my adventures through the State of Kentucky. These I shall be obliged to sketch as rapidly as possible. Neither my time nor my situation enables me to detail particulars with any degree of regularity; and you must condescend to receive them in the same random manner in which they occur, altogether destitute of fanciful embellishment; with nothing but their novelty, and the simplicity of truth, to recommend them.

I saw nothing of Lexington till I had approached within half-a-mile of the place, when the woods opening, I beheld the town before me, on an irregular plain, ornamented with a small white spire, and consisting of several parallel streets, crossed by some others; many of the houses built of brick, others of frame, neatly painted; but a great proportion wore a more humble and inferior appearance. The fields around looked clean and well fenced; gently undulating, but no hills in view. In a hollow between two of these parallel streets, ran a considerable brook, that, uniting with a larger a little below the town, drives several mills. A large quarry of excellent building stone also attracted my notice as I entered the

town. The main street was paved with large masses from this quarry, the foot path neat, and guarded by wooden posts. The numerous shops piled with goods, and the many well dressed females I passed in the streets; the sound of social industry, and the gay scenery of "the busy haunts of men," had a most exhilarating effect on my spirits, after being so long immured in the forest. My own appearance, I believe, was to many equally interesting; and the shopkeepers and other loungers interrogated me with their eyes as I passed, with symptoms of eager and inquisitive curiosity. After fixing my quarters, disposing of my arms, and burnishing myself a little, I walked out to have a more particular view of the place.

This little metropolis of the western country is nearly as large as Lancaster in Pennsylvania. In the centre of the town is a public square, partly occupied by the court-house and market place, and distinguished by the additional ornament of the pillory and stocks. The former of these is so constructed as to serve well enough, if need be, occasionally for a gallows, which is not a bad thought; for as nothing contributes more to make *hardened villains* than the pillory, so nothing so effectually rids society of them as the gallows; and every knave may here exclaim,

"My *bane* and *antidote* are both before me."

I peeped into the court-house as I passed, and though it was court day, I was struck with the appearance its interior exhibited; for, though only a plain square brick building, it has all the gloom of the Gothic, so much admired of late, by our modern architects. The exterior walls, having, on experiment, been found too feeble for the superincumbent honours of the roof and steeple, it was found necessary to erect, from the floor, a number of large, circular, and unplastered brick pillars, in a new order of architecture, (the thick end uppermost), which, while they serve to impress the spectators with the perpetual dread that they will tumble about their ears, contribute also, by their number and bulk, to shut out the light, and to spread around a reverential gloom, producing a melancholy and chilling effect; a good disposition of mind, certainly, for a man to enter a court of justice in.

One or two solitary individuals stole along the damp and silent floor ; and I could just descry, elevated at the opposite extremity of the building, the judges sitting, like spiders in a window corner, dimly distinguishable through the intermediate gloom. The market place, which stands a little to the westward of this, and stretches over the whole breadth of the square, is built of brick, something like that of Philadelphia, but is unpaved and unfinished. In wet weather you sink over the shoes in mud at every step ; and here again the wisdom of the police is manifest ; as nobody at such times will wade in there unless forced by business or absolute necessity ; by which means a great number of idle loungers are, very properly, kept out of the way of the market folks.

I shall say nothing of the nature or quantity of the commodities, which I saw exhibited there for sale as the season was unfavourable to a display of their productions ; otherwise something better than a few cakes of black maple sugar, wrapt up in greasy saddlebags, some cabbage, chewing tobacco, catmint and turnip tops, a few bags of meal, sassafras-roots, and skinned squirrels cut up into quarters—something better than all this, I say, in the proper season, certainly covers the stalls of this market place, in the metropolis of the fertile country of Kentucky.\*

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\* This letter, it should seem, gave offence to some of the inhabitants of Lexington ; and a gentleman residing in that town, solicitous about its reputation, undertook, in a letter to the Editor of the *Port Folio*, to vindicate it from strictures which he plainly insinuated were the offspring of ignorance, and unsupported by fact.

After a feeble attempt at sarcasm and irony, the letter-writer thus proceeds :

“ I have too great a respect for Mr. Wilson, as your friend, not to believe he had in mind some other market house than that of Lexington, when he speaks of it as ‘ unpaved and unfinished ! ’ But the people of Lexington would be gratified to learn what your ornithologist means by ‘ skinned squirrels cut up into quarters,’ which curious anatomical preparations he enumerates among the articles he saw in the Lexington market. Does Mr. Wilson mean to joke upon us ? If this is wit we must confess that, however abundant our country may be in good substantial matter-of-fact salt, the attic tart is unknown among us.

“ I hope, however, soon to see this gentleman’s American Ornithology. Its elegance of execution, and descriptive propriety, may assuage the little pique we have taken from the author.”

The horses of Kentucky are the hardiest in the world, not so much by nature as by education and habit. From the commencement of their existence they are habituated to every extreme of starvation and gluttony, idleness and excessive fatigue. In Summer they fare sumptuously every day. In Winter, when not a blade of grass is to be seen, and when the cows have deprived them of the very bark and buds of every fallen tree, they are ridden into town, fifteen or twenty miles, through roads and sloughs that would become the graves of any common animal, with a fury and celerity incomprehensible by you folks on the other side of the Alleghany. They are there fastened to the posts on the side of the streets, and around the public square, where hundreds of them may be seen, on a court day, hanging their

The Editor of the *Port Folio* having transmitted this letter to Wilson, previous to sending it to press, it was returned with the following note :

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "PORT FOLIO."

Bartram's Gardens, July 16, 1811.

DEAR SIR,

No man can have a more respectful opinion of the people of Kentucky, particularly those of Lexington, than myself ; because I have traversed nearly the whole extent of their country, and witnessed the effects of their bravery, their active industry, and daring spirit for enterprise. But they would be gods, and not men, were they faultless.

I am sorry that truth will not permit me to retract, as mere jokes, the few disagreeable things alluded to. I certainly had no other market-place in view, than that of Lexington, in the passage above-mentioned. As to the circumstance of 'skinned squirrels, cut up into quarters,' which seems to have excited so much sensibility, I candidly acknowledge myself to have been incorrect in that statement, and I owe an apology for the same. On referring to my notes taken at the time, I find the word "halves," not quarters ; that is, those "curious anatomical preparations, (skinned squirrels) were brought to market in the form of a saddle of venison ; not in that of a leg or shoulder of mutton.

With this correction, I beg leave to assure your very sensible correspondent, that the thing itself was no joke, nor meant for one ; but, like all the rest of the particulars of that sketch, "good substantial matter of fact."

If these explanations, or the perusal of my American Ornithology, should assuage the "little pique" in the minds of the good people of Lexington, it will be no less honourable to their own good sense, than agreeable to your humble servant, &c.  
*Port Folio* for August, 1811.

heads from morning to night, in deep cogitation, ruminating perhaps on the long expected return of Spring and green herbage. The country people, to their credit be it spoken, are universally clad in plain homespun ; soap, however, appears to be a scarce article ; and Hopkins's double cutters would find here a rich harvest, and produce a very improving effect. Though religion here has its zealous votaries, yet none can accuse the inhabitants of this flourishing place of bigotry, in shutting out from the pale of the church or church-yard any human being, or animal whatever. Some of these sanctuaries are open at all hours, and to every visitor. The birds of heaven find a hundred passages through the broken panes ; and the cows and hogs a ready access on all sides. The wall of separation is broken down between the living and the dead ; and dogs tug at the carcase of the horse, on the grave of his master. Lexington, however, with all its faults, which a few years will gradually correct, is an honourable monument of the enterprise, courage, and industry of its inhabitants. Within the memory of a middle-aged man, who gave me the information, there were only two log huts on the spot where this city is now erected ; while the surrounding country was a wilderness, rendered hideous by skulking bands of bloody and ferocious Indians. Now numerous excellent institutions for the education of youth, a public library, and a well endowed university, under the superintendence of men of learning and piety, are in successful operation. Trade and manufactures are also rapidly increasing. Two manufactories for spinning cotton have lately been erected ; one for woollen ; several extensive ones for weaving sail cloth and bagging ; and seven ropewalks, which, according to one of the proprietors, export, annually, ropeyarn to the amount of 150,000 dollars. A taste for neat, and even elegant, buildings is fast gaining ground ; and Lexington, at present, can boast of men who do honour to science, and of females whose beauty and amiable manners would grace the first circles of society. On Saturday, April 14th, I left this place for Nashville, distant about 200 miles. I passed through Nicholasville, the capital of Jessamine county, a small village begun about ten years ago, consisting of about twenty houses, with three shops and four taverns. The woods were scarcely beginning to look green, which



to me was surprising, having been led by common report to believe that Spring here is much earlier than in the lower parts of Pennsylvania. I must further observe, that instead of finding the woods of Kentucky covered with a profusion of flowers, they were, at this time, covered with rotten leaves and dead timber, in every stage of decay and confusion ; and I could see no difference between them and our own, but in the magnitude of the timber, and superior richness of the soil. Here and there the white blossoms of the *Sanguinaria canadensis*, or red root, were peeping through the withered leaves ; and the buds of the buckeye, or horse chestnut, and one or two more, were beginning to expand. Wherever the hackberry had fallen, or been cut down, the cattle had eaten the whole bark from the trunk, even to that of the roots.

Nineteen miles from Lexington I descended a long, steep, and rocky declivity, to the banks of Kentucky river, which is here about as wide as the Schuylkill ; and winds away between prodigious perpendicular cliffs of solid limestone. In this deep and romantic valley the sound of the boat horns, from several Kentucky arks, which were at that instance passing, produced a most charming effect. The river, I was told, had already fallen fifteen feet ; but was still high. I observed great numbers of uncommon plants and flowers, growing among the cliffs ; and a few solitary bank swallows were skimming along the surface. Reascending from this, and travelling for a few miles, I again descended a vast depth to another stream called Dick's river, engulfed among the same perpendicular masses of rock. Though it was nearly dark I found some curious petrifications, and some beautiful specimens of mother-of-pearl on the shore. The roaring of a mill-dam, and the rattling of the mill, prevented the ferryman from hearing me till it was quite night ; and I passed the rest of the road in the dark, over a rocky country, abounding with springs, to Danville. This place stands on a slight eminence, and contains about eighty houses, chiefly log and frame buildings, disposed in two parallel streets, crossed by several others. It has two ropewalks and a woollen manufactory ; also nine shops and three taverns. I observed a great many sheep feeding about here, amidst fields of excellent pasture. It is, however, but a dull place. A Roman

Catholic chapel has been erected here, at the expense of one or two individuals. The shopkeepers trade from the mouth of Dick's river down to New Orleans, with the common productions of the country, flour, hemp, tobacco, pork, corn, and whiskey. I was now one hundred and eighty miles from Nashville, and I was informed, not a town or village on the whole route. Every day, however, was producing wonders in the woods, by the progress of vegetation. The blossoms of the sassafras, dogwood, and red bud, contrasted with the deep green of the poplar and buckeye, enriched the scenery on every side; while the voices of the feathered tribes, many of which were to me unknown, were continually engaging me in the pursuit. Emerging from the deep solitude of the forest, the rich green of the grain fields, the farm house and cabins enbosomed midst orchards of glowing purple and white, gave the sweetest relief to the eye. Not far from the foot of a high mountain, called Mulders Hill, I overtook one of those family caravans so common in this country, moving to the westward. The procession occupied a length of road, and had a formidable appearance, though, as I afterwards understood, it was composed of the individuals of only a single family. In the front went a wagon drawn by four horses, driven by a negro, and filled with implements of agriculture; another heavy-loaded wagon, with six horses, followed, attended by two persons; after which came a numerous and mingled group of horses, steers, cows, sheep, hogs, and calves with their bells; next followed eight boys mounted double, also a negro wench with a white child before her; then the mother with one child behind her, and another at the breast; ten or twelve colts brought up the rear, now and then picking herbage, and trotting ahead. The father, a fresh good-looking man, informed me that he was from Washington county in Kentucky, and was going as far as Cumberland river; he had two ropes fixed to the top of the wagon, one of which he guided himself, and the other was entrusted to his eldest son, to keep it from oversetting in ascending the mountain. The singular appearance of this moving group, the mingled music of the bells, and the shoutings of the drivers, mixed with the echoes of the mountain, joined to the picturesque solitude of the place, and various reflections that

hurried through my mind, interested me greatly; and I kept company with them for some time, to lend my assistance if necessary. The country now became mountainous, perpetually ascending and descending; and about forty-nine miles from Danville I passed through a pigeon roost, or rather breeding-place, which continued for three miles, and, from information, extended in length for more than forty miles. The timber was chiefly beech; every tree was loaded with nests, and I counted, in different places, more than ninety nests on a single tree. Beyond this I passed a large company of people engaged in erecting a horse-mill for grinding grain. The few cabins I passed were generally poor; but much superior in appearance to those I met with on the shores of the Ohio. In the evening I lodged near the banks of Green river. This stream, like all the rest, is sunk in a deep gulf, between high perpendicular walls of limestone; is about thirty yards wide at this place, and runs with great rapidity; but, as it had fallen considerably, I was just able to ford it without swimming. The water was of a pale greenish colour, like that of the Licking, and some other streams, from which circumstance I suppose it has its name. The rocky banks of this river are hollowed out in many places into caves of enormous size, and of great extent. These rocks abound with the same masses of petrified shells so universal in Kentucky. In the woods, a little beyond this, I met a soldier, on foot, from New Orleans, who had been robbed and plundered by the Choctaws as he passed through their nation. "Thirteen or fourteen Indians," said he, "surrounded me before I was aware, cut away my canteen, tore off my hat, took the handkerchief from my neck, and the shoes from my feet, and all the money I had from me, which was about forty-five dollars." Such was his story. He was going to Chilicothe, and seemed pretty nearly done up. In the afternoon I crossed another stream of about twenty-five yards in width, called Little Barren; after which the country began to assume a new and very singular appearance. The woods, which had hitherto been stately, now degenerated into mere scrubby saplings, on which not a bud was beginning to unfold, and grew so open that I could see for a mile through them. No dead timber or rotting leaves were to be seen,

but the whole face of the ground was covered with rich verdure, interspersed with a variety of very beautiful flowers, altogether new to me. It seemed as if the whole country had once been one general level ; but that from some unknown cause, the ground had been undermined, and had fallen in, in innumerable places, forming regular, funnel-shaped, concavities of all dimensions, from twenty feet in diameter, and six feet in depth, to five hundred by fifty, the surface or verdure generally unbroken. In some tracts the surface was entirely destitute of trees, and the eye was presented with nothing but one general neighbourhood of these concavities, or, as they are usually called, sink-holes. At the centre, or bottom of some of these, openings had been made for water. In several places these holes had broken in, on the sides, and even middle of the road, to an unknown depth ; presenting their grim mouths as if to swallow up the unwary traveller. At the bottom of one of those declivities, at least fifty feet below the general level, a large rivulet of pure water issued at once from the mouth of a cave about twelve feet wide and seven high. A number of very singular sweet smelling lichens grew over the entrance, and a peewee had fixed her nest, like a little sentry-box, on a projecting shelf of the rock above the water. The height and dimensions of the cave continued the same as far as I waded in, which might be thirty or forty yards, but the darkness became so great that I was forced to return. I observed numbers of small fish sporting about, and I doubt not but these abound even in its utmost subterranean recesses. The whole of this country from Green to Red River, is hollowed out into these enormous caves, one of which, lately discovered in Warren County, about eight miles from the Dripping Spring, has been explored for upwards of six miles, extending under the bed of the Green River. The entrance to these caves generally commences at the bottom of a sinkhole ; and many of them are used by the inhabitants as cellars or spring-houses, having generally a spring or brook of clear water running through them. I descended into one of these belonging to a Mr. Wood, accompanied by the proprietor, who carried the light. At first the darkness was so intense that I could scarcely see a few feet beyond the circumference of the candle ; but, after being in for five or six

minutes, the objects around me began to make their appearance more distinctly. The bottom, for fifteen or twenty yards at first, was so irregular, that we had constantly to climb over large masses of wet and slippery rocks; the roof rose in many places to the height of twenty or thirty feet, presenting all the most irregular projections of surface, and hanging in gloomy and silent horror. We passed numerous chambers, or offsets, which we did not explore; and after three hours' wandering in these profound regions of glooms and silence, the particulars of which would detain me too long, I emerged with a handkerchief filled with bats, including one which I had never seen described; and a number of extraordinary insects of the Gryllus tribe, with antennæ upwards of six inches long, and which I am persuaded had never before seen the light of day, as they fled from it with seeming terror, and I believe were as blind in it as their companions the bats. Great quantities of native glauber salts are found in these caves, and are used by the country people in the same manner, and with equal effect, as those of the shops. But the principal production is saltpetre, which is procured from the earth in great abundance. The cave in Warren county above-mentioned, has lately been sold for three thousand dollars, to a saltpetre company, an individual of which informed me that, from every appearance, this cave had been known to the Indians many ages ago; and had evidently been used for the same purposes. At the distance of more than a mile from the entrance, the exploring party, on their first visit, found the roof blackened by smoke, and bundles of half-burnt canes lying scattered about. A bark mockasin, of curious construction, besides several other Indian articles, were found among the rubbish. The earth, also, lay piled in heaps, with great regularity, as if in preparation for extracting the saltpetre.

Notwithstanding the miserable appearance of the timber on these barrens, the soil, to my astonishment, produced the most luxuriant fields of corn and wheat I had ever before met with. But one great disadvantage is the want of water, for the whole running streams, with which the surface of this country once abounded, have been drained off to a great depth, and now murmur among



these lower regions, secluded from the day. One forenoon I rode nineteen miles without seeing water, while my faithful horse looked round, but in vain, at every hollow, with a wishful and languishing eye, for that precious element. These barrens furnished me with excellent sport in shooting grouse, which abound here in great numbers; and in the delightful groves that here and there rise majestically from these plains, I found many new subjects for my Ornithology. I observed all this day, far to the right, a range of high rocky detached hills, or knobs, as they are called, that skirt the barrens, as if they had been once the boundaries of the great lake that formerly covered this vast plain. These, I was told, abound with stone, coal, and copperas. I crossed Big Barren River in a ferry boat, where it was about one hundred yards wide; and I passed a small village called Bowling Green, near which I rode my horse up to the summit of one of these high insulated rocky hills, or knobs, which overlooked an immense circumference of country, spreading around bare and leafless, except where the groves appeared, in which there is usually water. Fifteen miles from this, induced by the novel character of the country, I put up for several days, at the house of a pious and worthy Presbyterian, whence I had excursions, in all directions, through the surrounding country. Between this and Red River the country had a bare and desolate appearance. Caves continued to be numerous; and report made some of them places of concealment for the dead bodies of certain strangers who had disappeared there. One of these lies near the banks of the Red River, and belongs to a person of the name of———, a man of notoriously bad character, and strongly suspected, even by his neighbours, of having committed a foul murder of this kind, which was related to me with all its minutiae of horrors. As this man's house stands by the road side, I was induced, by motives of curiosity, to stop and take a peep of him. On my arrival I found two persons in conversation under the piazza, one of whom informed me that he was the landlord. He was a dark mulatto, rather above the common size, inclining to corpulency, with legs small in proportion to his size, and walked lame. His countenance bespoke a soul capable of deeds of darkness. I had not been



three minutes in company when he invited the other man (who I understood was a traveller) and myself, to walk back and see his cave, to which I immediately consented. The entrance is in the perpendicular front of a rock, behind the house ; has a door with a lock and key to it, and was crowded with pots of milk, placed near the running stream. The roof and sides of solid rock were wet and dropping with water. Desiring ——— to walk before with the lights, I followed with my hand on my pistol, reconnoitering on every side, and listening to his description of its length and extent. After examining this horrible vault for forty or fifty yards, he declined going any farther, complaining of a rheumatism ; and I now first perceived that the other person had staid behind, and that we two were alone together. Confident in my means of self-defence, whatever mischief the devil might suggest to him, I fixed my eye steadily on his, and observed to him, that he could not be ignorant of the reports circulated about the country relative to this cave. "I suppose," said I, "you know what I mean?" "Yes, I understand you," returned he, without being the least embarrassed, "that I killed somebody and threw them into this cave—I can tell you the whole beginning of that damned lie," said he ; and, without moving from the spot, he detailed me a long story, which would fill half my letter, to little purpose, and which, with other particulars, I shall reserve for your amusement when we meet. I asked him why he did not get the cave examined by three or four reputable neighbours, whose report might rescue his character from the suspicion of having committed so horrid a crime. He acknowledged it would be well enough to do so, but did not seem to think it worth the trouble ; and we returned as we advanced, ——— walking before with the lights. Whether this man be guilty or not of the transaction laid to his charge I know not ; but his manners and aspect are such as by no means to allay suspicion.

After crossing Red River, which is here scarce twenty yards broad, I found no more barrens. The timber was large, and the woods fast thickening with green leaves. As I entered the State of Tennessee, the face of the country became hilly, and even mountainous. After descending an immense declivity, and coursing along the rich valley of Mankers creek, where I again

met with large flocks of paroquets, I stopt at a small tavern to examine, for three or four days, this part of the country. Here I made some interesting additions to my stock of new subjects for the Ornithology. On the fourth day I crossed the Cumberland, where it is about two hundred and fifty yards wide, and of great depth, bounded as usual, with high precipitous banks, and reached the town of Nashville, which towers like a fortress above the river. Here I have been busily employed these eight days; and send you the enclosed parcel of drawings, the result of every moment of leisure and convenience I could obtain. Many of the birds are altogether new; and you will find along with them every explanation necessary for your purpose.

You may rest assured of hearing from me by the first opportunity after my arrival at Natchez. In the meantime I receive with much pleasure the accounts you give me of the kind inquiries of my friends. To me nothing could be more welcome; for whether journeying in this world, or journeying to that which is to come, there is something of desolation and despair in the idea of being forever forgotten in our absence, by those whom we sincerely esteem and regard. . . .

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† LETTER LXXXIII.

Humorous account of 'Wilson, the hunter'—apparent forgetfulness of friends—'fashions' of Kentucky—'lady' floggers of the 'black devils'—a fellow-traveller—Strap and Roderick Random—a Methodist singing hymns—Barrens of Kentucky—a 'good Presbyterian'—flowers—caves—Nashville—cotton-planting—rags—'my parakeet'—hobgoblins, &c., &c.

To Miss SARAH MILLER.

Nashville, May 1, 1810.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Nine hundred miles distant from you sits Wilson, the hunter of birds' nests and sparrows, just preparing to enter on a wilderness of 780 miles—most of it in the territory of Indians—*alone*, but in good spirits, and expecting to have every pocket

crammed with skins of new and extraordinary birds before he reach the City of New Orleans. I daresay you have long ago accused me of cruel forgetfulness in not writing as I promised, but that, I assure you, was not the cause. To have forgot my friends in the midst of strangers, and to have forgot *you* of all others, would have been impossible. But I still waited until I should have something very interesting to amuse you with, and am obliged at last to take up the pen without having anything remarkable to tell you of. Yet I don't know but a description of the fashions of Kentucky would be almost as entertaining as that of London and Paris. What would you think of a blanket riding dress, a straw side-saddle, and a large mule with ears so long that they might almost serve for reins? I have seen many such fashionable figures in Kentucky. Or, what think you of a beau who had neither been washed nor shaved for a month, with three yards of coarse blue cloth wrapped round his legs by way of boots, a ragged greatcoat, without coat, jacket, or neckcloth, and breathing the rich perfume of corn whisky? Such figures are quite fashionable in Kentucky. This is a charming country for ladies. From the time they are first able to handle a cowskin, there is no amusement they are so fond of as flogging their negroes and negro wenches. This they do with so much coolness and seeming satisfaction, that it really gives them an air of great dignity and manliness. The landlady of the tavern where I lodge is a great connoisseur at this sort of play; and while others apply their cowskin only to the back, she has discovered that the shins, elbows, and knuckles are far more sensitive, and produce more agonising screams and greater convulsions in the "black devils," as she calls them, than any other place. My heart sickens at such barbarous scenes, and, to amuse you, I will change to some more agreeable subject.

In passing from Lexington to Nashville—a distance of 200 miles—I overtook on the road a man mending his stirrup-leathers, who walked round my horse several times and observed that I seemed to be armed. I told him I was well armed with gun and pistols, but I hoped he was not afraid to travel with me on that account, as I should be better able to assist in defending him as

well as myself, if attacked. After understanding the nature of my business, he consented to go on with me, and this man furnished me with as much amusement as Strap did to Roderick Random. He was a most zealous Methodist, and sung hymns the first day almost perpetually. Finding that I should be obliged to bear with this, I got him to try some of them to good old song tunes, and I then joined with him, as we rode along, with great piety. I found one in his book that very nearly answered to Jones' song of the "Vicar and Moses," and that soon became a favourite air with us. He laboured with so much earnestness to make me a convert—preaching sometimes with great vehemence—that I had no other resource but on such occasions to ride hard down hill, which, the preacher being unable to do, generally broke the thread of his discourse. He was, however, very useful to me in taking charge of my horse while I went into the woods after strange birds, and got so attached to me that he waited two days for me in a place where I had some drawings to make. I stopped five days in the Barrens of Kentucky, exploring that extraordinary country, in the house of a good Presbyterian, who charged me nothing, and would have kept me a month for some lessons in drawing which I gave his two daughters. Here my psalm-singing Methodist left me. These Barrens are almost without wood, and the whole face of the ground seemed to be covered with blossomed strawberries. They must grow in immense quantities here in the proper season. Great numbers of beautiful flowers that I have never seen before were seen in every direction, some of them extremely elegant. Many of the inhabitants keep their milk in caves 100 feet below the surface of the ground, and these caves extend so far underground that they have never ventured to their extremities. Frightful stories are told of some tavern-keepers, who are suspected of destroying travellers and secreting their bodies in these caves. If I were not afraid of giving you the horrors, I would relate an adventure I had in one of the most frightful of these caves with the fellow to whom it belongs, and who is strongly suspected of being a murderer, even by his neighbours. The town I am now in is the capital of the State of Tennessee, and is built on the top of a rocky mountain above the Cumberland river, which is about

as large as the Sckuykill, but much deeper. The people are now planting in their cotton fields, and it is curious to see the seeds lying like rags of tattered cotton along in the trenches. *A propos* of rags, I have been obliged to throw a good many of mine overboard since I purchased a horse. My handkerchiefs are reduced to three, and other articles in proportion. By the time I reach New Orleans, I expect to carry all the remainder on my back. My parakeet is my faithful companion yet, and I shall try hard to bring him home with me. He creeps into my pocket when I ride, and when I alight he comes out to amuse the people where I stop.

Please present my respectful compliments to your mother and father, and don't be offended at anything I have said. If I hear or see any ghosts or hobgoblins between this and Natchez, or anything worth telling, you may depend on hearing from me.

Compliments to sister Jones, &c., &c., &c., and believe me to be, yours affectionately,

ALEX. WILSON.

## + LETTER LXXXIV.

Natchez—'three sheets of drawings'—detained by rains—'going alone'—'hobgoblins'—a negro with 'two wooden legs'—Great Harpath—scenery described—caves—travellers 'duty as Hottentots'—unfordable rivers, devices for crossing—'lying within doors'—'poor friend Lewis'—account of suicide—grave—'roaring of Buffalo river'—Chickasaws—Indian women—swamp—America officers—Tennessee—Whip-poor-Will—wild woods—delay of ferry-boat—a 'heavenly place for the botanist'—Indian boy and 'Mow-guns'—horrible swamps—General Wade Hampton—a 'mocking-bird' killed by an Indian—superstition—'Big-town'—a 'white man' with two Indian wives—'hot-house'—Capt. Hughes—'burning thirst and fever'—rain-storm—overcome all obstacles and 'without whiskey'—Natchez described—Mississippi—vast level.

*To the Same.*

Natchez, Mississippi Territory,

May 18, 1810.

DEAR SIR,

About three weeks ago I wrote to you from Nashville, enclosing three sheets of drawings, which I hope you have received.\* I was at that time on the point of setting out for St. Louis; but being detained a week by constant and heavy rains, and considering that it would add four hundred miles to my journey, and detain me at least a month; and the season being already far advanced, and no subscribers to be expected there, I abandoned the idea, and prepared for a journey through the wilderness. I was advised by many not to attempt it alone; that the Indians were dangerous, the swamps and rivers almost impassable without assistance, and a thousand other hobgoblins were conjured up to dissuade me from going alone. But I weighed all these matters in my own mind; and attributing a great deal of this to vulgar fears and exaggerated reports, I equipped myself for the attempt. I rode an excellent horse, on which I could depend; I had a loaded pistol in each pocket, a loaded fowling-piece belted

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\* These drawings never came to hand. *Ord.*



across my shoulder, a pound of gunpowder in my flask, and five pounds of shot in my belt. I bought some biscuit and dried beef, and on Friday morning, May 4th, I left Nashville. About half-a-mile from town I observed a poor negro with two wooden legs, building himself a cabin in the woods. Supposing that this journey might afford you and my friends some amusement, I kept a particular account of the various occurrences, and shall transcribe some of the most interesting, omitting every thing relative to my Ornithological excursions and discoveries, as more suitable for another occasion. Eleven miles from Nashville I came to the Great Harpath, a stream of about fifty yards wide, which was running with great violence. I could not discover the entrance of the ford, owing to the rains and inundations. There was no time to be lost, I plunged in, and almost immediately my horse was swimming. I set his head aslant the current, and being strong, he soon landed on the other side. As the weather was warm, I rode in my wet clothes without any inconvenience. The country to-day was a perpetual succession of steep hills and low bottoms; I crossed ten or twelve large creeks, one of which I swam with my horse, where he was near being entangled among some bad drift wood. Now and then a solitary farm opened from the woods, where the negro children were running naked about the yards. I also passed along the north side of a high hill, where the whole timber had been prostrated by some terrible hurricane. I lodged this night in a miner's, who told me that he had been engaged in forming no less than thirteen companies for hunting mines, all of whom had left him. I advised him to follow his farm, as the surest vein of ore he could work. Next day (Saturday) I first observed the cane growing, which increased until the whole woods were full of it. The road this day winded along the high ridges of mountains that divide the waters of the Cumberland from those of the Tennessee. I passed few houses to-day; but met several parties of boatmen returning from Natchez and New Orleans; who gave me such an account of the road, and the difficulties they had met with, as served to stiffen my resolution to be prepared for every thing. These men were as dirty as Hottentots; their dress a shirt and trowsers of canvass, black, greasy, and sometimes in tatters; the skin burnt wherever

exposed to the sun; each with a budget, wrapt up in an old blanket; their beards, eighteen days old, added to the singularity of their appearance, which was altogether savage. These people came from the various tributary streams of the Ohio, hired at forty or fifty dollars a trip, to return back on their own expenses. Some had upwards of eight hundred miles to travel. When they come to a stream that is unfordable, they coast it for a fallen tree; if that cannot be had, they enter with their budget on their head, and when they lose bottom, drop it on their shoulders, and take to swimming. They have sometimes fourteen or fifteen of such streams to pass in a day, and morasses of several miles in length, that I have never seen equalled in any country. I lodged this night at one Dobbins's, where ten or twelve of these men lay on the floor. As they scrambled up in the morning, they very generally complained of being unwell, for which they gave an odd reason, lying within doors, it being the first of fifteen nights they had been so indulged. Next morning (Sunday) I rode six miles to a man's, of the name of Grinder, where our poor friend Lewis perished.\* In the same room where he expired, I took down from Mrs. Grinder the particulars of that melancholy event, which affected me extremely. This house or cabin is seventy-two miles from Nashville, and is the last white man's as you enter the Indian country. Governor Lewis, she said, came hither about sunset, alone, and inquired if he could stay for the night; and, alighting, brought the saddle into the house. He was dressed in a loose gown, white, striped with blue. On being asked if he came alone, he replied that there were two servants behind, who would soon be up. He called for some spirits, and drank a very little. When the servants arrived, one of whom was a negro, he inquired for his powder, saying he was sure he had some powder in a canister. The servant gave no distinct reply, and Lewis, in the meanwhile,

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\* It is hardly necessary to state, that this was the brave and enterprising traveller, whose journey across the Rocky Mountains, to the Pacific Ocean, has obtained for him well-merited celebrity. The true cause of him committing the rash deed, so feelingly detailed above, is not yet known to the public; but his friends will not soon forget the base imputations and cruel neglect, which the honourable mind of the gallant soldier knew not how to brook. — *Ord.*

walked backwards and forwards before the door, talking to himself. Sometimes, she said, he would seem as if he were walking up to her ; and would suddenly wheel round, and walk back as fast as he could. Supper being ready he sat down, but had eaten only a few mouthfuls when he started up, speaking to himself in a violent manner. At these times, she says, she observed his face to flush as if it had come on him in a fit. He lighted his pipe, and drawing a chair to the door sat down, saying to Mrs. Grinder, in a kind tone of voice, "Madam, this is a very pleasant evening." He smoked for some time, but quitted his seat and traversed the yard as before. He again sat down to his pipe, seemed again composed, and casting his eyes wistfully towards the west, observed what a sweet evening it was. Mrs. Grinder was preparing a bed for him ; but he said he would sleep on the floor, and desired the servant to bring the bearskins and buffalo robe, which were immediately spread out for him ; and it being now dusk, the woman went off to the kitchen, and the two men to the barn, which stands about two hundred yards off. The kitchen is only a few paces from the room where Lewis was, and the woman being considerably alarmed by the behaviour of her guest could not sleep, but listened to him walking backwards and forwards, she thinks, for several hours, and talking aloud, as she said, "like a lawyer." She then heard the report of a pistol, and something fall heavily on the floor, and the words—"O Lord !" Immediately afterwards she heard another pistol, and in a few minutes she heard him at her door calling out "O madam ! give me some water, and heal my wounds." The logs being open, and unplastered, she saw him stagger back and fall against a stump that stands between the kitchen and room. He crawled for some distance, and raised himself by the side of a tree, where he sat about a minute. He once more got to the room ; afterwards he came to the kitchen-door, but did not speak ; she then heard him scraping the bucket with a gourd for water ; but it appeared that this cooling element was denied the dying man ! As soon as day broke and not before—the terror of the woman having permitted him to remain for two hours in this most deplorable situation—she sent two of her children to the barn, her husband not being at home, to bring the servants ; and on going

in they found him lying on the bed ; he uncovered his side, and showed them where the bullet had entered ; a piece of the forehead was blown off, and had exposed the brains, without having bled much. He begged they would take his rifle and blow out his brains, and he would give them all the money he had in his trunk. He often said, "I am no coward ; but I am so strong, so hard to die." He begged the servant not to be afraid of him, for that he would not hurt him. He expired in about two hours, or just as the sun rose above the trees. He lies buried close by the common path, with a few loose rails thrown over his grave. I gave Grinder money to put a post fence round it to shelter it from the hogs, and from the wolves ; and he gave me his written promise he would do it. I left this place in a very melancholy mood, which was not much allayed by the prospect of the gloomy and savage wilderness which I was just entering alone. . . .

I was roused from this melancholy reverie by the roaring of Buffalo River, which I forded with considerable difficulty. I passed two or three solitary Indian huts in the course of the day, with a few acres of open land at each ; but so wretchedly cultivated, that they just make out to raise maize enough to keep in existence. They pointed me out the distances by holding up their fingers. This is the country of the Chickasaws, though erroneously laid down in some maps as that of the Cherokees. I slept this night in one of their huts. The Indians spread a deer skin for me on the floor. I made a pillow of my portmanteau, and slept tolerably well. An old Indian laid himself down near me. On Monday morning, I rode fifteen miles, and stopt at an Indian's to feed my horse. The sight of my paroquet brought the whole family around me. The women are generally naked from the middle upwards ; and their heads, in many instances, being rarely combed, look like a large mop. They have a yard or two of blue cloth wrapt round by way of petticoat, that reaches to the knees. The boys were generally naked ; except a kind of bag of blue cloth, by way of fig-leaf. Some of the women have a short jacket, with sleeves, drawn over their naked body, and the rag of a blanket is a general appendage. I met to-day two officers of the United States' army, who gave me a better account of the road

than I had received. I passed through many bad swamps to-day; and at about five in the evening, came to the banks of the Tennessee, which was swelled by the rains, and is about half-a-mile wide thirty miles below the Muscle Shoals, and just below a long island laid down in your small map. A growth of canes of twenty and thirty feet high covers the low bottoms, and these cane swamps are the gloomiest and most desolate-looking places imaginable. I hailed for the boat as long as it was light, without effect. I then sought out a place to encamp, kindled a large fire, stript the canes for my horse, eat a bit of supper, and lay down to sleep,—listening to the owls, and the Chuck-Wills-Widow—a kind of Whip-poor-Will that is very numerous here. I got up several times during the night to recruit my fire, and see how my horse did, and but for the gnats, would have slept tolerably well. These gigantic woods have a singular effect by the light of a large fire,—the whole scene being circumscribed by impenetrable darkness except that in front, where every leaf is strongly defined and deeply shaded. In the morning, I hunted until about six, when I again renewed my shoutings for the boat; and it was not until near eleven that it made its appearance. I was so enraged at this delay that, had I not been cumbered with baggage, I believe I should have ventured to swim the river. I vented my indignation on the owner of the boat, who is a half-breed, threatening to publish him in the papers, and advise every traveller I met to take the upper-ferry. This man charges one dollar for man and horse, and thinks because he is a chief he may do in this way what he pleases. The country now assumed a new appearance,—no brush-wood, no fallen or rotten timber. One could see a mile through the woods, which were covered with high grass fit for mowing. These woods are burnt every Spring, and thus are kept so remarkably clean that they look like the most elegant noblemen's parks. A profusion of flowers altogether new to me, and some of them very elegant, presented themselves to my view as I rode along. This must be a heavenly place for the botanist. The most observable of these flowers was a kind of Sweet William, of all tints, from white to the deepest crimson; a superb Thistle, the most beautiful I had ever seen; a species of Passion flowers, very



beautiful; a stately plant of the Sunflower family—the button of the deepest orange, and the radiating petals bright carmine, the breadth of the flower about four inches; a large white flower like a deer's tail; great quantities of the Sensitive plant, that shrunk instantly on being touched, covered the ground in some places. Almost every flower was new to me, except the Carolina Pink-root and Columbo, which grew in abundance on every side. At Bear Creek, which is a large and rapid stream, I first observed the Indian boys with their blow-guns. These are tubes of cane, seven feet long, and perfectly straight when well made. The arrows are made of slender slips of cane, twisted, and straightened before the fire, and covered for several inches at one end with the down of thistles, in a spiral form, so as just to enter the tube. By a puff they can send these with such violence as to enter the body of a partridge, twenty yards off. I set several of them a-hunting birds by promises of reward, but not one of them could succeed. I also tried some of the blow-guns myself, but found them generally defective in straightness. I met six parties of boatmen to-day, and many straggling Indians, and encamped about sunset near a small brook, where I shot a turkey, and on returning to my fire found four boatmen, who stayed with me all night, and helped me to pick the bones of the turkey. In the morning I heard the turkeys gobbling all round me, but not wishing to leave my horse, having no great faith in my guests' honesty, I proceeded on my journey. This day (Wednesday) I passed through the most horrid swamps I had ever seen. These are covered with a prodigious growth of canes, and high woods, which together shut out almost the whole light of day for miles. The banks of the deep and sluggish creeks that occupy the centre are precipitous, where I had often to plunge my horse seven feet down, into a bed of deep clay, up to his belly; from which nothing but great strength and exertion could have rescued him. The opposite shore was equally bad, and beggars all description. For an extent of several miles, on both sides of these creeks, the darkness of night obscures every object around. On emerging from one of the worst of these, I met General Wade Hampton, with two servants and a pack-horse, going, as he said, towards Nash-



ville. I told him of the mud campaign immediately before him. I was covered with mire and wet, and I thought he looked somewhat serious at the difficulties he was about to engage. He has been very sick lately. About half-an-hour before sunset, being within sight of the Indian's, where I intended to lodge, the evening being perfectly clear and calm, I laid the reins on my horse's neck to listen to a Mocking-bird, the first I had heard in the Western country, which, perched on the top of a dead tree before the door, was pouring out a torrent of melody. I think I never heard so excellent a performer. I had alighted, and was fastening my horse, when, hearing the report of a rifle immediately beside me, I looked up, and saw the poor Mocking-bird fluttering to the ground. One of the savages had marked his elevation, and barbarously shot him. I hastened over into the yard, and, walking up to him, told him that was bad, very bad! that this poor bird had come from a far distant country to sing to him, and that, in return, he had cruelly killed him. I told him the Great Spirit was offended at such cruelty, and that he would lose many a deer for doing so. The old Indian, father-in-law to the bird-killer, understanding by the negro interpreter what I said, replied that when these birds come singing and making a noise all day near the house, somebody will surely die,—which is exactly what an old superstitious German, near Hampton in Virginia, once told me. This fellow had married the two eldest daughters of the old Indian, and presented one of them with the bird he had killed. The next day I passed through the Chickasaw Big-town, which stands on the high open plain that extends through their country three or four miles in breadth, by fifteen in length. Here and there you perceive little groups of miserable huts formed of saplings, and plastered with mud and clay. About these, are generally a few peach and plum trees. Many ruins of others stand scattered about, and I question whether there were twenty inhabited huts within the whole range of view. The ground was red with strawberries, and the boatmen were seen in straggling parties feasting on them. Now and then a solitary Indian, wrapt in his blanket, passed sullen and silent. On this plain are beds of shells, of a large species of clam, some of which are almost entire. I this day stopt

at the house of a white man, who had two Indian wives, and a hopeful string of young savages, all in their fig leaves. Not one of them could speak a word of English. This man was by birth a Virginian, and had been forty years among the Chickasaws. His countenance and manners were savage and worse than Indian. I met many parties of boatmen to-day, and crossed a number of bad swamps. The woods continued to exhibit the same open luxuriant appearance, and at night I lodged at a white man's, who had also two wives, and a numerous progeny of young savages. Here I met with a lieutenant of the United States army anxiously inquiring for General Hampton. On Friday, the same open woods continued. I met several parties of Indians, and passed two or three of their hamlets. At one of these were two fires in the yard, and at each eight or ten Indians, men and women, squat on the ground. In these hamlets there is generally one house built of a circular form, and plastered thickly all over without and within with clay. This is called a hot house, and it is the general winter-quarter of the hamlet in cold weather. Here they all kennel, and, having neither window nor place for the smoke to escape, it must be a sweet place while forty or fifty of them have it in occupancy. Round some of these hamlets were great droves of cattle, horses, and hogs. I lodged this night on the top of a hill, far from water, and suffered severely from thirst. On Saturday, I passed a number of most execrable swamps. The weather was extremely warm, and I had been attacked by something like the dysentery, which occasioned a constant burning thirst, and weakened me greatly. I stopt this day frequently to wash my head and throat in the water, to allay the burning thirst, and, putting on my hat without wiping, received considerable relief from it. Since crossing the Tennessee, the woods have been interspersed with pine, and the soil has become more sandy. This day I met a Captain Hughes, a traveller on his return from Santa Fee. My complaint increased so much that I could scarcely sit on horseback, and all night my mouth and throat were parched with a burning thirst and fever. On Sunday, I bought some raw eggs, which I ate. I repeated the dose at mid-day, and towards evening, and found great benefit from this simple remedy. I inquired all along the road for fresh

eggs, and for nearly a week made them almost my sole food, till I completed my cure. The water in these cane swamps is little better than poison ; and under the heat of a burning sun, and the fatigues of travelling, it is difficult to repress the urgent calls of thirst. On the Wednesday following, I was assailed by a tremendous storm of rain, wind, and lightning, until I and my horse were both blinded by the deluge, and unable to go on. I sought the first most open place, and, dismounting, stood for half-an-hour under the most profuse heavenly shower-bath I ever enjoyed. The roaring of the storm was terrible ; several trees around me were broken off and torn up by the roots, and those that stood were bent almost to the ground. Limbs of trees of several hundred weight flew past within a few yards of me, and I was astonished how I escaped. I would rather take my chance in a field of battle than in such a tornado again.

On the fourteenth day of my journey, at noon, I arrived at this place, having overcome every obstacle alone, and without being acquainted with the country ; and, what surprised the boatmen more, without whisky. On an average, I met from forty to sixty boatmen every day returning from this place and New Orleans. The Chickasaws are a friendly, inoffensive people ; and the Choctaws, though more reserved, are equally harmless. Both of them treated me with civility, though I several times had occasion to pass through their camps where many of them were. The paroquet which I carried with me was a continual fund of amusement to all ages of these people ; and as they crowded around to look at it, gave me an opportunity of studying their physiognomies without breach of good manners.

In thus hastily running over the particulars of this journey, I am obliged to omit much that would amuse and interest you ; but my present situation, a noisy tavern, crowded in every corner, even in the room where I write, with the sons of riot and dissipation, prevents me from enlarging on particulars. I could also have wished to give you some account of this place, and of the celebrated Mississippi, of which you have heard so much. On these subjects, however, I can at present only offer you the following sketch, taken the morning after my arrival here.

The best view of this place and surrounding scenery, is from the old Spanish fort on the south side of the town, about a quarter of a mile distant. From this high point, looking up the river, Natchez lies on your right, a mingled group of green trees, and white and red houses, occupying an uneven plain, much washed into ravines, rising as it recedes from the bluff or high precipitous bank of the river. There is, however, neither steeple, cupola, nor distinguished object to add interest to its appearance. The country beyond it to the right is thrown up into the same irregular knolls ; and at the distance of a mile in the same direction you have a peep of some cultivated farms, bounded by the general forest. On your left, you look down, at a depth of two or three hundred feet, on the river winding majestically to the south, the intermediate space exhibiting wild perpendicular precipices of brown earth. This part of the river and shore is the general rendezvous of all the arks or Kentucky boats, several hundreds of which are at present lying moored there, loaded with the produce of the thousand shores of this noble river. The busy multitudes below present a perpetually varying picture of industry ; and the noise and uproar, softened by the distance, with the continual crowing of the poultry, with which many of those arks are filled, produce cheerful and exhilarating ideas. The majestic Mississippi, swelled by his ten thousand tributary streams, of a pale brown colour, half a mile wide, and spotted with trunks of trees, that show the different threads of the current and its numerous eddies, bears his depth of water past in silent grandeur. Seven gun-boats, anchored at equal distances along the stream, with their ensigns displayed, add to the effect. A few scattered houses are seen on the low opposite shore, where a narrow strip of cleared land exposes the high gigantic trunks of some deadened timber that bound the woods. The whole country beyond the Mississippi, from south round to west and north, presents to the eye one universal ocean of forest, bounded only by the horizon. So perfect is this vast level, that not a leaf seems to rise above the plain, as if shorn by the hands of heaven. At this moment, while I write, a terrific thunder storm, with all its towering assemblage of black alpine clouds, discharging lightning in every direction,

overhangs this vast level, and gives a magnificence and sublime effect to the whole.

## EXTRACTS FROM DIARY.

*March 9.*—Visited a number of the literati and wealthy of Cincinnati, who all told me that they would think of it, viz., subscribing. They are a very thoughtful people.

*March 17.*—Rained and hailed all last night. Set off at eight o'clock, after emptying my boat of the deluge of water. Rowed hard all day. At noon recruited myself with some biscuits, cheese, and American wine. Reach the Falls—night sets in—hear the roaring of the Rapids. After excessive hard work arrive at Bear-grass Creek, and fasten my boat to a Kentucky one. Take my baggage, and grope my way to Louisville—put up at the Indian Queen Tavern, and gladly sit down to rest myself.

*March 18.*—Rose quite refreshed. Found a number of land speculators here. Titles to lands in Kentucky subject to great disputes.

*March 19.*—Rambling round the town with my gun. Examined Mr. ——'s drawings in crayons. Very good. Saw two new birds he had—both *Motacillæ*.

*March 20.*—Set out this afternoon with the gun. Killed nothing new. People in taverns here devour their meals. Many shop-keepers board in taverns; also, boatmen, land speculators, merchants, &c. No naturalist to keep me company.

*March 21.*—Went out this afternoon shooting, with Mr. A. Saw a number of Sandhill cranes. Pigeons numerous.

*March 23.*—Packed up my things, which I left in the care of a merchant here to be sent on to Lexington; and having parted, with great regret, with my paroquet to the gentlemen of the tavern, I bade adieu to Louisville, to which place I had four letters of recommendation, and was taught to expect much of every thing there; but neither received one act of civility from those to whom I was recommended, one subscriber, nor one new bird; though I delivered my letters, ransacked the woods repeatedly, and visited all the characters likely to subscribe. Science

or literature has not one friend in this place. Every one is so intent on making money that they can talk of nothing else ; and they absolutely devour their meals that they may return the sooner to their business. Their manners correspond with their features.

Good country this for lazy fellows ; they plant corn, turn their pigs into the wood, and in the autumn feed upon corn and pork—they lounge about the rest of the year.

*March 24.*—Weather cool. Walked to Shelbyville to breakfast. Passed some miserable log-houses in the midst of rich fields. Called at 'Squire C.'s, who was rolling logs. Sat down beside him, but was not invited in, though it was about noon.

*March 29.*—Finding my baggage not likely to come on, I set out from Frankfort for Lexington. The woods swarm with pigs, squirrels, and woodpeckers. Arrive exceedingly fatigued.

Wherever you go you hear people talking of buying and selling land ; no readers, all traders. The Yankees, wherever you find them, are all traders. Found one here, a house carpenter, who came from Massachusetts, and brought some barrels of apples down the river from Pennsylvania to this town, where he employs the negro women to hawk them about the streets, at thirty-seven and a half cents per dozen.

Restless, speculating set of mortals here, full of lawsuits, no great readers, even of politics or newspapers.

The sweet courtesies of life, the innumerable civilities in deeds and conversation, which cost one so little, are seldom found here. Every man you meet with has either some land to buy or sell, some law-suit, some coarse hemp or corn to dispose of ; and if the conversation do not lead to any of these he will force it. Strangers here receive less civilities than in any place I have ever been in. The respect due to the fatigues and privations of travellers is no where given, because every one has met with as much, and thinks he has seen more than any other. No one listens to the adventures of another, without interrupting the narrative with his own ; so that, instead of an auditor, he becomes a competitor in adventure-telling. So many adventurers, also, continually wandering about here, injure the manners of the people,



for avarice and knavery prey most freely and safely upon passengers whom they may never meet again.

These few observations are written in Salter White's garret, with little or no fire, wood being a scarce article here—the forests being a full half mile distant.

*April 9.*—Court held to-day, large concourse of people; not less than one thousand horses in town, hitched to the side-posts—no food for them all day. Horses selling by auction. Negro woman sold same way: my reflections while standing by and hearing her cried, “three hundred and twenty-five dollars for this woman and boy! going! going!” Woman and boy afterwards weep. Damned, damned slavery! this is one infernal custom which the Virginians have brought into this country. Rude and barbarous appearance of the crowd. Hopkins' double cutters much wanted here.

*April 10.*—Was introduced to several young ladies this afternoon, whose agreeable society formed a most welcome contrast to that of the lower orders of the other sex. Mrs. . . . , an amiable, excellent lady; think that savage ignorance, rudeness and boorishness, were never so contrasted by female sweetness, affability, and intelligence.

*April 12.*—Went this evening to drink tea with Mr. . . . ; was introduced to Mrs. . . . , a most lovely, accomplished and interesting woman. Her good sense and lively intelligence of a cast far superior to that of almost any woman I have ever seen. She is most unfortunately unwell with a nervous complaint, which affects her head. She told me, most feelingly, that the Spring, which brings joy to every other being, brings sorrow to her, for in Winter she is always well.

*April 25.*—Breakfasted at Walton's, thirteen miles from Nashville. This place is a fine rich hollow, watered by a charming, clear creek, and never fails. Went up to Madison's Lick, where I shot three paroquets and some small birds.

*April 26.*—Set out early, the hospitable landlord, ISAAC WALTON, refusing to take anything for my fare, or that of my horse, saying—“You seem to be travelling for the good of the world; and I cannot, and will not charge you anything. Whenever you come this way, call and stay with me, you shall be

welcome!" This is the first instance of such hospitality which I have met with in the United States.

*Wednesday, May 23.*—Left Natchez, after procuring twelve subscribers; and having received a kind letter of invitation from William Dunbar, Esq., I availed myself of his goodness, and rode nine miles along the usual road to his house; where, though confined to his bed by a severe indisposition, I was received with great hospitality and kindness; had a neat bed-room assigned me; and was requested to consider myself as at home during the time I should find it convenient to stay in exploring this part of the country.

LETTER OF WILLIAM DUNBAR.

Forest, 20th May, 1810.

SIR,

It is very unfortunate that I should be so much indisposed as to be confined to my bedroom; nevertheless, I cannot give up the idea of having the pleasure of seeing you as soon as you find it convenient. The perusal of your first volume of Ornithology, lent me by General Wilkinson, has produced in me a very great desire of making your acquaintance.

I understand, from my boy, that you propose going in a few days to New Orleans, where you will see some small cabinets of natural history that may interest you. But, as I presume it is your intention to prosecute your inquiries into the interior of our country, this cannot be done better than from my house as your headquarters, where everything will be made convenient to your wishes. My house stands literally in the forest; and your beautiful Orioles, with other elegant birds, are our court-yard companions.

The bearer attends you with a couple of horses, on the supposition that it may be convenient for you to visit us to-day; otherwise, he shall wait upon you any other day that you shall appoint.

I am respectfully, &c.,

WILLIAM DUNBAR.

## LETTER LXXXV.

Loss of drawings and incessant labour—closely engaged on third volume—  
Michaux—new species—Dunbar.

*To Mr. WILLIAM BARTRAM.*

Philadelphia, September 2nd, 1810.

. . . Incessant labour since my return, to make up my loss of drawings, which were sent by post from Nashville, has hitherto prevented me from paying you a visit. I am closely engaged on my third volume. Any particulars relative to the history of the meadow lark, crow blackbird, snow bunting, cuckoo, paroquet, nonpareil, pinnated grouse, or blue grosbeak, if interesting, would be received by me with much pleasure. I have lately received from Michaux a number of rich specimens of birds, printed in colours. I have since made some attempts at this kind of printing, and have succeeded tolerably well.

Michaux has published several numbers of his *American Sylva*, in Paris, with coloured plates. I expect them here soon.

I collected a number of entire new species in my south-western tour; and in my return I visited several of the islands off the Florida shore, where I met with some very curious land birds.

Mr. Dunbar, of Natchez, remembered you very well, and desired me to carry his good wishes to you. . . .

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 + LETTER LXXXVI.

'Taws and hickory'—advice sought and given—Murray and Lawson.

*To Mr. WILLIAM DUNCAN, Frankford, Penn.*

Philadelphia, February 12th, 1811.

. . . So you have once more ascended the preceptor's rostrum, to wield the terrors of the taws and hickory. Trying as this situation is, and various and distracting as its avocations sometimes undoubtedly are, it is elysium to the scenes which you have lately

emerged from ; and as far transcends these latter, as honourable independence towers above despised and insulted servitude. You wish me to suggest any hints I may think proper for your present situation. Your own experience and prudence render anything I could advise unnecessary, as it is all included in the two resolutions which you have already taken ; first, to distinguish, as clearly as possible, the whole extent of your duty ; and, secondly, to fulfil every item of that to the best of your abilities. Accordingly, the more extensive and powerful these are, the greater good you will be capable of doing ; the higher and more dignified will your reputation be ; and the easier and calmer will your department be, under every circumstance of duty. You have but these two things to surmount, and the whole routine of teaching will become an agreeable amusement ; and every closing day will shed over your mind that blissful tranquility, “ which nothing earthly gives or can destroy.”

Devote your whole time, except what is proper for needful exercise, to rendering yourself completely master of your business. For this purpose rise by the peep of dawn ; take your regular walk ; and then commence your stated studies. Be under no anxiety to hear what people think of you, or of your tutorship ; but study the improvement, and watch over the good conduct, of their children consigned to your care, as if they were your own. Mingle respect and affability with your orders and arrangements. Never show yourself feverish or irritated ; but preserve a firm and dignified, a just and energetic deportment, in every emergency. To be completely master of one's business, and ever anxious to discharge it with fidelity and honour, is to be great, beloved, respectable and happy.

I could have wished that you had been accommodated with a room and boarding in a more private and retired situation, where your time and reflections would have been more your own ; and perhaps these may be obtained hereafter. Try to discover your own defects, and labour with all your energy to supply them. Respect yourself, and fear nothing but vice and idleness. If one had no other reward for doing one's duty, but the grateful sensations arising therefrom on the retrospection, the recompense would

be abundant, as these alone are able to bear us up amidst every reverse.

At present I cannot enlarge further, my own mind being harrassed with difficulties relative to my publication. I have now no farther dependence on Murray ; and I mean to make it consistent both with the fame, and the interest, of Lawson to do his best for me. I hope you will continue to let me hear from you, from time to time. I anticipate much pleasure from the improvements which I have no doubt you will now make in the several necessary departments of your business. Wishing you every success in your endeavours to excel, I remain, with sincere regard, &c. . . .

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† LETTER LXXXVII.

News given as in Letter LXXXI (See pp. 178).

*To his* FATHER,  
25th February, 1811.

DEAR FATHER,

I have made various excursions through the United States in quest of ornithological subjects. My last route was across the Alleghany mountains to Pittsburg, thence to the falls of the Ohio, 720 miles alone, in a small boat—thence through the Chickasaw, and Choctaw country, (nations of Indians) and West Florida, to New Orleans, in which journey I sustained considerable hardship, having many dangerous creeks to swim, and having to encamp for thirteen different nights in the woods alone. From New Orleans I sailed to East Florida, furnished with a letter to the Spanish Governor there, and visited a number of the islands that lie to the

south of the peninsula. I returned to Philadelphia on the 2d of September last, after an absence of seven months.

In prosecuting this journey, I had sometimes to kindle a large fire ; I then stript the canes for my horse, ate a bit of supper, and lay down to sleep, listening to the owls and cheekwills, and to a kind of Whip-Poor-Will, that are very numerous. I got up several times during the night to recruit my fire, and see how my horse did, and but for the gnats would have slept tolerably well. These gigantic woods have a singular effect by the light of a large fire, the whole scene being circumscribed by impenetrable darkness, except that in front, where every leaf is strongly defined and deeply shaded. On passing the ferry, the country assumed a new appearance ; no brushwood, or broken and fallen timber. One could see a mile through the woods, which were covered with high grass fit for mowing. A profusion of flowers altogether new to me, and some of them very elegant, presented themselves to my view as I rode along. This must be a noble place for the botanist. The most noticeable of these flowers was a kind of sweet william, of all tints, from white to the deepest crimson. A superb thistle, the most beautiful I had ever seen, a species of passion flower, very beautiful, a stately plant of the sun-flower family, the button of the deepest orange, and the radiating petals, bright carmine ; the breadth of the flower about four inches, a large white flower like a deer's tail, great quantities of the sensitive plant, that shrunk instantly on being touched, in some places covered the ground. Almost every flower was new to me, except the Carolina perule root, and columbo, which grows in abundance on every side.

On Saturday I passed a number of execrable swamps. The weather was extremely warm, and I had been attacked by something like the dysentery, which occasioned a constant burning thirst, and weakened me greatly. My complaint increased so much, that I could scarcely sit on horseback, and all night my mouth and throat were parched with a burning thirst and fever. On Sunday I bought some raw eggs, which I ate, and repeated the dose at mid-day and towards evening. I found great benefit from this simple remedy, and enquired all along the road for fresh eggs, and for nearly a week made them almost my sole food, until



I completed my cure. The water in these cane swamps is little better than poison, and under the heat of a burning sun, and the fatigues of travelling, it is difficult to repress the urgent calls of thirst. On the Wednesday following, I was assailed by a tremendous storm of wind, and rain, and lightning, until I and my horse were both blinded by the deluge, and unable to go on. I sought the first open place, and dismounting, stood for half an hour under the most profuse shower-bath I had ever enjoyed. The roaring of the storm was terrible. Several trees around me were broken off, and torn up by the roots, and those that stood, were bent almost to the ground. Limbs of trees flew past within a few yards of me, and I was astonished how I escaped; and I would rather take my chance in a field of battle, than in such a tornado again.

On the fourteenth day of my journey, at noon, I arrived at Natchez, Mississippi, after having overcome every obstacle alone, and without being acquainted with the country, and what surprised the boatmen more, without whisky. . . .

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† LETTER LXXXVIII.

'A trifle' sent home to Father—literary 'ambition'—explorations.

To Mr. DAVID WILSON.

6th June, 1811.

. . . By the first opportunity, I will transmit a trifle to our old father, whose existence, so far from being forgotten, is as dear to me as my own. But, David, an ambition of being distinguished in the literary world, has required sacrifices and exercises from me with which you are unacquainted; and a wish to reach the glorious rock of independence, that I might from thence assist my relatives who are struggling with, and buffetting the billows of adversity, has engaged me in an undertaking more laborious and extensive than you are aware of, and has occupied almost every

moment of my time for several years. Since February, 1810, I have slept for several weeks in the wilderness alone, in an Indian country, with my gun and my pistols in my bosom, and have found myself so reduced by sickness as to be scarcely able to stand, when not within 300 miles of a white settlement, and under the burning latitude of 25 degrees. . . .

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\* LETTER LXXXIX.

Letter and presents—misfortunes—'deplorable' state of Paisley—'wonder any should remain'—'seven millions' now from 'four' in 1794 in United States—sea-sickness and home-sickness—'resolution of a man'—'I have, however, determined with myself never to entice or persuade a man from his native country'—'bleaching' no employment here—money needed—Shaw of Seedhills—a tavern—farming—David well pleased—help, but difficulties.

To his BROTHER and SISTER.  
Philadelphia, October 20, 1811.

DEAR BROTHER AND SISTER,

I received by David your letter, and the present of neckcloth, for which please to accept my acknowledgments and thanks. I have read your letter with attention, and heard from my brother your misfortunes, which have been severe indeed, but which must be forgotten as much as possible. The representation you give of the state of trade, and situation of tradesmen in Paisley and around, is truly deplorable. To me, it is not surprising that numbers abandon such a country. My astonishment is that anybody able to leave it should remain in it. Were the United States in the same desolation and bankrupt, with as mournful prospects of improvement, I would no more hesitate whether I should leave it than I would a half-ruined house ready to tumble about my ears. The United States and its territories contain at present seven millions of souls. In 1794, when I first arrived, its population was less than four millions. All these, generally speaking, are doing well. Yet, you imagine there is not room or a fair chance left for any single family! The deficiency, if there be any, might be in the individual, not in the

country, which holds out every encouragement to the active and industrious. You have frequently heard of *sea-sickness*, how disagreeable and distressing it is. There is another kind to which new-comers are sometimes subject on their arrival here, and for a few months after, called *home-sickness*, no less disagreeable while it lasts; but these maladies are generally temporary, and leave the patient generally better than before, with a keen appetite and renovated spirits. If you can conquer the qualms of this last kind on your first arrival, and look round you for improvement, with the resolution of a man determined to surmount difficulties, come when you will you will certainly succeed. I have, however, determined with myself never to entice or persuade a man from his native country to a foreign land. These are adventures that should be undertaken on his own risk, and supported on his own resolutions. But you have asked my advice with so much earnestness, that I would be acting a most unnatural part did I refuse it. There is little chance of following the employment of bleaching here; but there is an infinite number of employments besides to which your own judgment and activity may direct you. As to the precise sum of money necessary for you to have on your arrival, I am not fit to determine. Some little furniture will be necessary, and other articles, to set up housekeeping. Industry and economy will soon arrange all these matters. Robert Shaw, formerly of Seedhills, makes a good living in New York by dyeing and cleaning of clothes. He also keeps a tavern, and I do not see why something of the kind might not also do here. But of these matters, you yourself must be the judge. It is also customary here for some people to farm land on what is called *The Shares*; that is, for half the produce of the ground. There are many avenues for industry here; but the man must choose that best suited to his taste and capacity. David is well, and lives with me. He seems very well pleased with his new situation, and I shall endeavour to make it mutually advantageous to us both.

I am, with sincerity,

DEAR BROTHER AND SISTER,

Affectionately yours,

ALEX. WILSON.

P.S.—Should you determine on coming here, I will render you every assistance in my power ; but difficulties must be encountered everywhere in this world.

A. W.

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† LETTER XC.

Home-news welcome—poems—desolation at home—property in America—‘ seven millions ’ of a population already—youthful ardour—David Brodie—M’Gavin.

*To Mr. THOMAS CRICHTON.*

Philadelphia, Oct. 28th, 1811.

DEAR SIR,

I received your kind letter, of May 31, with a copy of “The Library,” both extremely agreeable to me, and interesting to one, who for seventeen years had heard nothing concerning you, but who had neither forgot you, nor the many friendly acts he had experienced from you. I have read your poem several times. It embraces a wide range of subjects, and contains much excellent sentiment, with several well-drawn sketches, among which that of Chloe, the novel reader, is conspicuous and just. To the prayer of the last eight lines I most heartily say Amen.

I thank you for the information you have given me of my old friends, Neilson, Kennedy, Picken, &c. and am glad to find, that, amidst the deaths, disasters and convulsions of domestic life, your merit continues to meet its reward. The contrast between your life and mine, during the last twenty years has been great ; yet, I much question, whether, with both in perspective, I should have been willing to exchange fates, and I am sure you never would ; so neither of us ought to complain.

While every letter I receive from Britain acknowledges the general desolation of trade and the sufferings of its manufacturers, I see nothing around me in this happy country but peace, prosperity, and abundance. Our merchants indeed have experienced great embarrassments, but generally speaking the country is flourishing.

The census of our population amounts to upwards of seven millions ; nearly double to what it was when I first landed in America. What nation on earth can produce a parallel to this?

My dear Sir, I cannot recal to my mind some of our social interviews without a smile. You found me in early life an enthusiastic young man, pursuing what I thought right, without waiting to consider its expediency, and frequently suffering, (and that feelingly too) for my temerity. At present, I have the same ardour in the pursuit of my object, but the object is selected with more discretion.

If you see my old friend David Brodie, (for I understand that he still treads this earth, *in propria persona*,) present him with my respects. He and I mutually studied each other's characters for some time, with the laudable design of telling each other all that we knew ridiculous and contemptible of each other. My report was made first, and in full detail; David's never made its appearance, and so I lost a very favourable opportunity of knowing my own faults. I suppose he found me so heterogeneous and contradictory—so confounded bad, and entangled, that he did not know at which end to begin.

My dear Sir, I shall be always glad to hear from you, when you find convenient to write, and beg you would convey my sincere respects to the surviving friends you mention, particularly to Mr. M'Gavin, and believe me, with great truth,

Dear Sir,

Your most obliged friend,

ALEX. WILSON.

† LETTER XCI.

A wanderer in Scotland, and still—independence.

*To a Friend.*

November 3d, 1811.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I was a wanderer when I was in Scotland, and I have been much more so since my arrival here. Few Americans have

seen more of their country than I have done, and none love it better. Fortune has not yet paid me up all her promises, after all the wild goose chase she has led me ; but she begins to look a little more gracious than usual, and I am not without hope. Twenty years of disappointment have only whetted my appetite for independence. . . .

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† LETTER XCII.

Of 'Forest Trees'—French language—'Ornithology'—translation of 'Forest Trees'—Bradford—Barham—Barton—'forty new species of Land Birds,' and now engaged on Water Birds.

To Mr. F. A. MICHAUX.

Philadelphia, June 6th, 1812.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I had the pleasure of receiving a letter from you, dated April 10, 1812; but living at Mr. Bartram's, I have not yet seen Mr. Correa, the gentleman who brought it over. I have also had the great satisfaction of examining the plates of your four numbers of *Forest Trees*, which are beautifully executed ; and I regret most sincerely that my little knowledge of the French language prevents me from perusing with equal satisfaction, the interesting particulars you relate of their history. I expected long before this to be able to congratulate you on the publication of a translation of your work here, and I announced the same in the preface of one of my volumes ; but sorry I am to inform you that no steps have yet been taken to put the design in execution, and I fear none will be taken for many months to come. Unless there be an evident certainty of profit, booksellers, in general, are very indifferent to publish works of any kind, however great their merit may be ; and the poor author's feelings are little regarded. Few men have known this more experimentally than myself. I have sacrificed everything to publish my *Ornithology*—have written six volumes and am engaged on the seventh. . . .



I have frequently conversed with Mr. Bradford about publishing a translation of your *Forest Trees*; and you may rest assured that, should it be undertaken, I will use all my influence in its favour. Were you here yourself, I have no doubt but it would be undertaken, and I think with success, for all who have seen it admire it. I procured our good friend, Mr. Wm. Bartram, a sight of it, and he was greatly delighted with its appearance. One of my friends read a great part of it in English to him, and he was highly satisfied.

Dr. Barton has not yet published his *General Zoology*,\* which he has been announcing, from time to time, for so many years. It is much easier to say these things than do them.

Mr. Wm. Bartram is still as you left him, and you are frequently the subject of our conversation at table. I have made many extensive excursions lately, and have discovered, in all, about forty new species of Land Birds, never taken notice of by any other writer. I am now engaged on the Water Birds; and had just returned yesterday from the seashore when your letter was presented to me. Dr. H. and Mr. P. have both publicly announced your work, but as no translation has been yet made, it has not been reviewed by any of our writers.

Wishing you all the success which is justly due to the labours, journies, and investigations you have made in behalf of Natural History, I remain, &c."

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\* This work, which it was the intention of the late learned professor to entitle "Elements of Zoology," after being *ten* years in the press, was advanced no further than *fifty-six* pages, in octavo, at the death of the author. It does not appear that he left much manuscript matter in continuation, consequently the public will derive no benefit from a work which is too incomplete for publication. The printed sheets I have read not only with satisfaction, but instruction, and cannot forbear expressing my regret that an undertaking which Dr. Barton certainly knew how to perform, and to which his learning was adequate, should have been suffered to perish in embryo. The art of concentrating his talents was one for which the professor was not greatly distinguished.—*Ord.*

## † LETTER XCIII.

‘Imagination led judgment astray.’

To his FATHER.  
August 10th, 1812.

The difficulties and hardships I have encountered in life have been useful to me. In youth I had wrong ideas of life. Imagination too often led judgment astray. You would find me much altered from the son you knew me in Paisley,—more diffident of myself, and less precipitate, though often wrong. . . .

## † LETTER XCIV.

‘Rambles since leaving Philadelphia’—Hudson—Catskill mountains—Lake Champlain—new birds—Connecticut river—Haverhill—ascended ‘White Mountains’—‘palpitation of the heart’—voice of science and politics.

To Mr. GEORGE ORD.  
Boston, October 13th, 1812.

DEAR SIR,

It is not in my power at present to give you anything more than a slight sketch of my rambles since leaving Philadelphia. My route up the Hudson afforded great pleasure, mingled with frequent regret that you were not along with me, to share the enjoyment. About thirty miles south of Albany we passed within ten miles of the celebrated Catskill Mountains, a gigantic group, clothed with forest to the summits. In the river here I found our common reed (*Zizania aquatica*) growing in great abundance in shoals extending along the middle of the river. I saw flocks of Red-wings, and some Black Ducks, but no Rail, or Reed-birds.

From this place my journey led me over a rugged, mountainous country, to Lake Champlain, along which I coasted as far as Burlington in Vermont. Here I found the little coot-footed *Tringa* or Phalarope\* that you sent to Mr. Peale; a new and

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\* *P. Fulicarius*.

elegantly marked Hawk ; and observed some Black Ducks. The shores are alternate sandy bays, and rocky headlands running into the lake. Every tavern was crowded with officers, soldiers, and travellers. Eight of us were left without a bed ; but having an excellent great-coat, I laid myself down in a corner, with a determination of sleeping in defiance of the uproar of the house, and the rage of my companions, who would not disgrace themselves by a prostration of this sort.

From Lake Champlain I traversed a rude mountainous region to Connecticut river, one hundred miles above Dartmouth College. I spent several days with the gun in Groton, and Ryegate townships, and made some discoveries. From this I coasted along the Connecticut to a place called Haverhill, ten miles from the foot of Moose-hillock, one of the highest of the White Mountains of New Hampshire. I spent the greater part of a day in ascending to the peak of one of these majestic mountains, whence I had the most sublime and astonishing view that was ever afforded me. One immensity of forest lay below, extended on all sides to the farthest verge of the horizon ; while the only prominent objects were the columns of smoke from burning woods, that rose from various parts of the earth beneath to the heavens ; for the day was beautiful and serene. Hence I travelled to Dartmouth, and thence in a direct course to Boston. From Boston I passed through Portsmouth to Portland, and got some things new ; my return was by a different route. I have procured three new and beautiful Hawks ; and have gleaned up a stock of remarks that will be useful to me hereafter.

I hope, my dear sir, that you have been well since I left you, I have myself been several times afflicted with a violent palpitation of the heart, and want to try whether a short voyage by sea will not be beneficial.

In New England the rage of war, the virulence of politics, and the pursuit of commercial speculation, engross every faculty. The voice of Science, and the charms of Nature, unless these last present themselves in the form of prize sugars, coffee, or rum, are treated with contempt.

## † LETTER XCV.

'Colourists' all left—'seventh' volume of 'Ornithology'—West sends his 'Death of Nelson'—Philosophical Society of Philadelphia.

To Mr. WM. BARTRAM.

Philadelphia, April 21, 1813.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I have been extremely busy these several months, my colourists having all left me ; so I have been obliged to do extra duty this last winter. Next week I shall publish my seventh volume ; and shall send you your copy with the earliest opportunity. I am now engaged with the ducks, all of which, that I am acquainted with, will be comprehended in the eighth volume.

Since I had the pleasure of seeing you, I have hardly left the house half-an-hour ; and I long most ardently to breathe once more the fresh air of the country, and gaze on the lovely face of Nature. Will it be convenient for the family to accommodate me (as I shall be alone) this summer ? Please to let me know.

I lately received from the celebrated Mr. West, a proof impression of his grand historical picture of the death of Admiral Nelson—a present which I highly value.

The Philosophical Society of Philadelphia have done me the honour to elect me a member, for which I must certainly, in gratitude, make them a communication on some subject, this summer. I long very much to hear from you ; and, with my best wishes for your health and happiness, am very truly

Your sincere friend.

ALEX. WILSON.

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 † LETTER XCVI.

'Far from being in good health.'

Philadelphia, 6th July, 1813.

. . . I am myself far from being in good health. Intense application to study has hurt me much. My 8th volume is now in the press and will be published in November. One volume more will complete the whole. . . .



**III.—Essays of 'Ornithology.'**



#### N O T E .

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It seems a remarkable and inexcusable thing that in the reprints of Wilson's great work, *e. g.*, Sir William Jardine's and Professor Jamieson's, the 'Prefaces' of the successive volumes have been (with the exception of the first) either altogether omitted or mutilated. Their reproduction among his Prose is at once redress of an injury and the gift to readers on the hither side of the Atlantic of a series of really charming Essays. On the selection—literary as distinguished from scientific—proper—given under this heading of Essays from the 'Ornithology,' see Preface in the present volume.

G.



# Essays of 'Ornithology.'

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## ESSAY I.

### AN ANECDOTE FOR A PREFACE.

The whole use of a Preface seems to be either to elucidate the nature and origin of the work or to invoke the clemency of the Reader. Such observations as have been thought necessary for the former, will be found in the Introduction; extremely solicitous to obtain the latter, I beg leave to relate the following anecdote.

In one of my late visits to a friend's in the country, I found their youngest son, a fine boy of eight or nine years of age, who usually resides in town for his education, just returning from a ramble thro the neighbouring woods and fields, where he had collected a large and very handsome bunch of wild flowers, of a great many different colors; and, presenting them to his mother, said, with much animation in his countenance, "Look, my dear 'ma, what beautiful flowers I have found growing on our place! Why, all the woods are full of them! red, orange, blue, and 'most every color. O, I can gather you a whole parcel of them, much handsomer than these, all growing in our own woods! Shall I, 'ma? Shall I go and bring more?" The good woman received the bunch of flowers with a smile of affectionate complacency; and, after admiring for some time the beautiful simplicity of Nature, gave her willing consent; and the little fellow went off, on the wings of ecstasy, to execute his delightful commission.

The similitude of this little boy's enthusiasm to my own, struck me ; and the reader will need no explanations of mine to make the application. Should my country receive with the same gracious indulgence the specimens which I here humbly present her ; should she express a desire for me to go and bring her more, the highest wishes of my ambition will be gratified ; for, in the language of my little friend, our whole woods are full of them ! and I can collect hundreds more, much handsomer than these.

ALEXANDER WILSON.

PHILADELPHIA, *September 1, 1808.*

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## ESSAY II.

### WHAT THE WORK IS TO BE.

In the commencement of a work of such magnitude, and so novel in this country, some account will necessarily be expected, of the motives of the Author, and of the nature and intended execution of the work. As to the former of these, it is respectfully submitted, that, amusement blended with instruction, the correction of numerous errors which have been introduced into this part of the natural history of our country, and a wish to draw the attention of my fellow-citizens, occasionally, from the discordant jarrings of politics, to a contemplation of the grandeur, harmony, and wonderful variety of Nature, exhibited in this beautiful portion of the animal creation, are my principal, and almost my only motives, in the present undertaking. I will not deny that there may also be other incitements. Biassed, almost from infancy, by a fondness for birds, and little else than an enthusiast in my researches after them, I feel happy to communicate my observations to others, probably from the mere principle of self-gratification, that source of so many even of our most virtuous actions ; but I candidly declare, that lucrative views have nothing to do in the business. In all my wild-wood rambles, these never were sufficient either to allure me to a single excursion, to discourage me from one, or to engage my pen or pencil in the present publication. My hopes on

this head are humble enough ; I ask only support equal to my merits, and to the laudability of my intentions. I expect no more ; I am not altogether certain even of this. But, leaving the issue of these matters to futurity, I shall, in the meantime, comfort myself with the good old adage, "Happy are they who expect nothing, for they shall not be disappointed."

As to the nature of the work, it is intended to comprehend a description and representation of every species of our native birds, from the shores of St. Laurence to the mouths of the Mississippi, and from the Atlantic Ocean to the interior of Louisiana. These will be engraved in a style superior to anything of the kind hitherto published ; and colored from Nature, with the most scrupulous adherence to the true tints of the original.

The bare account of scientific names, colors of bills, claws, feathers, &c., would form but a dry detail ; neither in a publication of the present kind, where every species is faithfully figured and colored, is a long and minute description of the form and feathers, absolutely necessary. This would, in the opinion of some, be like introducing a gentleman to company, with "Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. ———. He has on a blue coat, white pantaloons, hussar boots," &c., &c., while a single glance of the eye, over the person himself, told us all this before the orator had time to open his mouth ; so infinitely more rapidly do ideas reach us through the medium of the eye than by that of the ear.

But as Time may prey on the best of colors, what is necessary, in this respect, will by no means be omitted, that the figures and descriptions may mutually corroborate each other. It is also my design to enter more largely than usual into the manners and disposition of each respective species ; to become, as it were, their faithful biographer, and to delineate their various peculiarities, in character, song, building, economy, &c., as far as my own observations have extended, or the kindness of others may furnish me with materials.

The Ornithology of the United States exhibits a rich display of the most splendid colors, from the green, silky, golden-bespangled down of the minute Humming Bird, scarce three inches in extent, to the black coppery wings of the gloomy Condor, of sixteen feet,

who sometimes visits our northern regions ; a numerous and powerful band of songsters, that for sweetness, variety, and melody, are surpassed by no country on earth ; an ever-changing scene of migration from torrid to temperate, and from northern to southern regions, in quest of suitable seasons, food and climate ; and such an amazing diversity in habit, economy, form, disposition, and faculties, so uniformly hereditary in each species, and so completely adequate to their peculiar wants and convenience, as to overwhelm us with astonishment at the power, wisdom, and beneficence of the Creator !

In proportion as we become acquainted with these particulars, our visits to and residence in the country, become more and more agreeable. Formerly, on such occasions, we found ourselves in solitude, or, with respect to the feathered tribes, as it were in a strange country, where the manners, language, and faces of all, were either totally overlooked, or utterly unknown to us : now, we find ourselves among interesting and well known neighbours and acquaintances ; and in the notes of every songster, recognise, with satisfaction, the voice of an old friend and companion. A study thus tending to multiply our enjoyments at so cheap a rate, and to lead us by such pleasing gradations, to the contemplation and worship of the Great First Cause, the Father and Preserver of all, can neither be idle nor useless, but is worthy of rational beings, and doubtless, agreeable to the Deity.

In order to attain a more perfect knowledge of birds, naturalists have divided them into Classes, Orders, Genera, Species, and Varieties ; but in doing this, scarcely two have agreed on the same mode of arrangement ; and this has indeed proved a source of great perplexity to the student. Some have increased the number of orders to an unnecessary extent, multiplied the genera, and out of mere varieties, produced what they supposed to be entire new species. Others, sensible of the impropriety of this, and wishing to simplify the science as much as possible, have reduced the orders and genera to a few, and have thus thrown birds, whose food, habits, and other characteristic features are widely different, into one and the same tribe, and thereby confounded our perception of that beautiful gradation of affinity and resemblance, which Nature

herself seems to have been studious of preserving throughout the whole. One principal cause of the great diversity of classifications appears to be owing to the neglect, or want of opportunity, in these Writers, of observing the manners of the living birds, in their unconfined state, and in their native countries. As well might philosophers attempt to class mankind into their respective religious denominations, by a mere examination of their physiognomy, as naturalists to form a correct arrangement of animals, without a knowledge of these necessary particulars.

It is only by personal intimacy, that we can truly ascertain the character of either, more particularly that of the feathered race; noting their particular haunts, modes of constructing their nests, manner of flight, seasons of migration, favourite food, and numberless other minutiae, which can only be obtained by frequent excursions in the woods and fields, along lakes, shores, and rivers; and this requires a degree of patience and perseverance which nothing but an enthusiastic fondness for the pursuit can inspire.

Of the numerous systems which have been adopted by different Writers, that published by Dr. Latham, in his "Index Ornithologicus," and "General Synopsis of Birds," seems the least subject to the objections above-mentioned; and as, in particularising the order, genus, &c., to which each bird belongs, this system, with some necessary exceptions, has been generally followed in the present Work, it is judged proper to introduce it here, for the information and occasional consultation of the reader. . . .

[Table not given here or elsewhere, as scientific-technical.] . . .

. . . It may probably be expected that, in a publication of this kind, we should commence with the order Accipitres, and proceed regularly through the different orders and genera according to the particular system adopted. This, however desirable, is in the present case altogether impracticable, unless, indeed, we possessed living specimens or drawings of every particular species to be described; an acquisition which no private individual nor Public Museum in the world can as yet boast of. This Work is not intended to be a mere compilation from books, with figures taken from stuffed and dried birds, which would be but a very sorry compliment to the science, but a transcript from living



Nature, embracing the whole Ornithology of the United States; and as it is highly probable that numerous species, at present entirely unknown, would come into our possession long after that part of the Work appropriated for the particular genera to which they belonged had been finished, and thereby interrupt, in spite of every exertion, the regularity of the above arrangement, or oblige us to omit them altogether. Considering these circumstances, and that during the number of years which the completion of the present Work will necessarily occupy, the best opportunities will be afforded, and every endeavour used to procure drawings of the whole, a different mode has been adopted as being more agreeably diversified, equally illustrative of the science, and perfectly practicable; which the other is not. The birds will therefore appear without regard to generical arrangement; but the order, genus, &c., of each will be particularly noted, and a complete Index added to the whole, in which every species will be arranged in systematic order, with reference to the volume, page, and plate, where each figure and description may be instantly found.

From the great expense of engravings executed by artists of established reputation, many of those who have published Works of this kind have had recourse to their own ingenuity in etching their plates; but however honourable this might have been to their industry, it has been injurious to the effect intended to be produced by the figures,—since the *point* alone is not sufficient to produce a finished engraving, and many years of application are necessary to enable a person, whatever may be his talents and diligence, to handle the graver with the facility and effect of the pencil; while the time thus consumed might be more advantageously employed in finishing drawings and collecting facts for the descriptive part, which is the proper province of the Ornithologist. Every person who is acquainted with the extreme accuracy of eminent engravers, must likewise be sensible of the advantages of having the imperfections of the pencil corrected by the excellence of the graver. Every improvement of this kind, the Author has studiously availed himself of, and has frequently furnished the artist with the living or newly-killed subject itself to assist his ideas.

In colouring the impressions, the same scrupulous attention has been paid to imitate the true tints of the original. The greatest number of the descriptions, particularly those of the nests, eggs, and plumage, have been written in the woods, with the subjects in view, leaving as little as possible to the lapse of recollection. As to what relates to the manners, habits, &c., of the birds, the particulars on these heads are the result of personal observation, from memoranda taken on the spot; if they differ, as they will in many points, from former accounts, this at least can be said in their behalf, that a single fact has not been advanced which the Writer was not himself witness to, or received from those on whose judgment and veracity he believed reliance could be placed. When his own stock of observations has been exhausted, and not till then, he has had recourse to what others have said on the same subject, and all the most respectable performances of a similar nature have been consulted, to which access could be obtained; not neglecting the labours of his predecessors in this particular path, Messrs. Catesby and Edwards, whose memories he truly respects. But as a sacred regard to truth requires that the errors or inadvertencies of these authors, as well as of others, should be noticed and corrected, let it not be imputed to unworthy motives, but to its true cause,—a zeal for the promotion of that science, in which these gentlemen so much delighted, and for which they have done so much.

From the Writers of our own country the Author has derived but little advantage. The first considerable list of our birds was published in 1787, by Mr. Jefferson, in his celebrated "Notes on Virginia," and contains the names of a hundred and nine species, with the designations of Linnæus and Catesby, and references to Buffon. The next, and by far the most complete that has yet appeared, was published in 1791, by Mr. William Bartram, in his "Travels through North and South Carolina," &c., in which two hundred and fifteen different species are enumerated, and concise descriptions and characteristics of each added in Latin and English. Dr. Barton, in his "Fragments of the Natural History of Pennsylvania," has favoured us with a number of remarks on this subject; and Dr. Belknap, in his "History of New Hampshire," as well as

Dr. Williams, in that of Vermont, have each enumerated a few of our birds. But these, from the nature of the publications in which they have been introduced, can be considered only as catalogues of names, without the detail of specific particulars, or the figured and colored representations of the birds themselves. This task, hardest of all, has been reserved for one of far inferior abilities, but not of less zeal. With the example of many solitary individuals, in other countries, who have succeeded in such an enterprize, he has cheerfully engaged in the undertaking, trusting for encouragement solely to the fidelity with which it will be conducted.\*

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### ESSAY III.

#### PROGRESS OF THE WORK, AND APPEAL.

The present volume, being the second of the series, is offered to the public with all that humility which becomes a reverential admirer, and very lowly imitator, of the handiworks of the Supreme Creator of the universe. Contemplating their amazing variety, tracing their elegance, symmetry, and matchless excellence, at each progressive step he feels more and more sensibly his own infinite inferiority; and is only encouraged to proceed, by the consciousness that what he does is not displeasing to that beneficent Power, and may contribute to the innocent amusement, and perhaps virtuous instruction of his fellow beings. In the meantime, he avails himself, on this occasion, of the usual privilege of an Author, to make a few explanatory remarks, which could not, with propriety, be introduced in any other place.

In sketching out the present plan, it was calculated that the whole of our Ornithology could be comprised in ten volumes, commencing with the Land Birds, and closing with the Water Fowl. The same opinion is still entertained. The different

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\* Essays I. and II. from 'American Ornithology' (1803), Vol. I., pp. iii.-iv. and 1-9.—G.

species, of both divisions, which are either occasionally or regularly found within the territory of the United States, may amount to about four hundred. The first section will, probably, occupy six volumes; and the remaining four comprehend the whole of the Waders and Aquatic tribes.

The number of the figures introduced in the present volume is considerably more than that of the preceding; and the manner in which they have been executed will, I trust, convince the patrons of this work that there exists no disposition in the Author to fall off from the original elegance of his publication. On the contrary, he has still further improvements in view; which, when effected, will, he humbly hopes, with all due deference to the judgment of the public, render it not only a standard work on this branch of our natural history, but give it a just claim to rank in elegance, as well as fidelity and copiousness of description, with those of any other country.

Hitherto, the whole materials and mechanical parts of this publication have been the production of the United States, except the colors. As these form so important an article in a work of this kind, the most particular attention has been paid to their real, and not merely specious, good qualities; but it is not without regret and mortification he is obliged to confess that, for these, he has been principally indebted to Europe. The present unexampled spirit, however, for new and valuable manufactures, which are almost every day rising around us, and the exertions of other intelligent and truly patriotic individuals in the divine science of Chemistry, give the most encouraging hopes that a short time will render him completely independent of all foreign aid, and enable him to exhibit the native hues of his subjects in colors of our own, equal in brilliancy, durability, and effect to others. In the present volume, some beautiful native ochres have been introduced; and one of the richest yellows is from the laboratory of Messrs. Peale and Son of the Museum of this city. Other tints of equal excellence are confidently expected from the same quarter.

In the prosecution of this undertaking, the author has been honoured with communications of facts, from various quarters of

the United States, relative to the subject on which he is engaged. For all these, he returns his most grateful acknowledgments, and gladly indulges the idea that they will become more and more frequent. The subjects of his history being in themselves so numerous, and dispersed over such extensive regions, the observations of one man, be his industry and enterprise what they may, are altogether insufficient to embrace the whole ; and unless assisted by the experience and observations of others, a thousand interesting facts and minutiae of character would unavoidably escape him, which might otherwise have formed the most valuable part of his publication. Another particular, equally interesting to him, he would beg leave to suggest to the consideration of those ingenious friends who may honour him with their correspondence. As the provincial names of many of our birds are so multiplied, and frequently so local, as to be altogether unknown in other districts,—and in the communications of those unacquainted with the scientific names and arrangement render it sometimes very difficult to determine what particular species is really meant,—if, in addition to well-authenticated facts, preserved skins of such birds as are supposed rare or new could be conveniently transmitted to the Author, the obligation would be greatly increased, and properly acknowledged. Several gentlemen living in remote parts of the Union, and others trading between the ports of North and South America, having generously expressed a willingness to oblige him in this respect provided they were acquainted with an approved mode of skinning and preserving them, the following process is respectfully submitted as being fully sufficient both for their purpose and that of the naturalist.\* And though no drawings have been or will be made for

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\* As soon as the bird is shot, let *memoranda* be taken of the length, the breadth (measuring from tip to tip of the expanded wings), color of the eyes, bills, legs and feet, and such particulars of its manners, &c., as may be known. Make a longitudinal incision under the wing, sufficiently large to admit the body to be taken out ; disjoint the wing close to the body under the skin, and endeavour with a pair of scissars or penknife to reach the neck, which cut off ; pass the skin carefully over to the other wing, which also disjoint and separate from the body, then over the whole body and thighs, which last cut off close to the knees ; lastly,

this work from any stuffed subjects where living specimens of the same can be procured, yet the former serve a very important purpose,—they enable the Author to ascertain the real existence and residence of such subjects, and, coming from various and remote parts of the continent, throw great light on the extent of range and the migrations of various species of the feathered tribes; particulars the most interesting because hitherto the most obscure and unsatisfactorily treated of all others in the whole science of Ornithology.

The Author has now only to add that, as far as an acquisition of these depends on his own personal exertions in ransacking our fields and forests, our seashores, lakes, marshes, and rivers, and in searching out and conversing with experienced and intelligent sportsmen and others on whose information he can venture to rely, he pledges himself that no difficulty, fatigue, or danger, shall deter him from endeavouring to collect information from every authentic source; hopeful that the able and enlightened friends of that country whose Natural History he is thus endeavouring to illustrate, will not leave him unsupported.

ALEXANDER WILSON.\*

PHILADELPHIA, *January 1, 1810.*

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separate the whole skin from the body at the roots of the tail feathers, which must not be injured. Return to the neck and carefully pass the skin to, and beyond, the eyes, which scoop out; cut off the neck close to the skull, penetrate this way with your knife into the brain, which scrape completely out; dissect all the fleshy parts from the head, wings, and skin; rub the whole inside with a solution of arsenic, sprinkle some of the same into the cavity of the brain, throat, &c.; stuff the vacuity of the brain and eyes with cotton, to their full dimensions; return the skin carefully back, arranging the eyelids and plumage; stuff the whole with cotton to its proper size and form, sew up the longitudinal incision, and, having carefully arranged the whole plumage, sprinkle it outwardly with a little powdered arsenic; place it in a close box, into which some camphor has been put, and cover it with cotton or ground tobacco. In the whole operation, the greatest care must be taken not to soil the plumage with blood.

If arsenic cannot conveniently be had, common salt may be substituted.

\* 'American Ornithology' (1810) Vol. II., pp. v.-ix.—G.



## ESSAY IV.

## OF BOOKS OF NATURAL HISTORY, AND REQUEST.

Books on Natural History, calculated to improve the taste, to enlarge the understanding and better the heart, as they are friends to the whole human race, are generally welcomed by people of all parties. They may be compared to those benevolent and amiable individuals, who, amidst the tumult and mutual irritations of discordant friends, kindly step in to reconcile them to each other, by leading the discourse to subjects of less moment, but of innocent and interesting curiosity; till the mind forgets its perturbations, and gradually regains its native repose and composure. So come, in these times of general embarrassment, dispute and perplexity, the peaceful, unassuming pages of AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGY. With little to recommend them but the simplicity of truth, and some faint imitations of a most glorious and divine ORIGINAL, they may, nevertheless, calm for a time the tumult of the mind, communicate agreeable amusement, and suggest hints for instruction. At least, these are some of the principal objects to which they have been zealously directed.

Unforeseen and unavoidable circumstances, which it is unnecessary to recapitulate, and over which the Author had no control, have retarded the publication of the present volume beyond the usual and stated period. Complaints and regret, for what is irrecoverable, would be as unavailing as apologies for what could not be prevented, would be improper. He will only on this subject remark, that a recurrence of similar obstacles not being likely to take place, and the plates of the fourth volume, now in the hands of the engraver, being in considerable forwardness, every exertion will be made, consistent with the correct execution of the work, to atone for past delays, by its early and prompt publication.

With respect to the contents of the present volume, the Author has a few hints to offer to the consideration of the intelligent reader, whose favourable opinion in behalf of his labours he is most anxious to merit.

Should there appear in some of the following accounts of our native birds, a more than common deficiency of particulars as to their manners and migration, he would beg leave to observe, that he is not engaged in copying from Museums the stuffed subjects they contain; nor from books or libraries the fabulous hearsay-narratives of closet-naturalists. A more laborious, and, as he trusts, a more honourable duty is prescribed him. He has examined the stores of living Nature for himself: and submitted with pleasure, to all the difficulties and fatigues incident to such an undertaking. Since he had last the honour of presenting himself before the public, he has traced the wilds of our western forests alone, for upwards of seven months; and traversed, in that time, more than three thousand miles, a solitary, exploring pilgrim. As nearly one half of the whole number of birds contained in the following sheets (part of the products of his late tour) are such as have never before been taken notice of by naturalists, a complete detail of their habitudes and manners cannot reasonably be expected. To collect these, years of patient and attentive observation are requisite. What with truth and accuracy he could do, he has done. In the drawings he has aimed at faithful and characteristic resemblances of his subjects—in the literary part a clear and interesting detail of their manners, as far as these have come to his knowledge; and to future observation must be left the task of filling up those chasms in the history of some of them, which the so recent discovery of their species has rendered unavoidable.

To gentlemen of leisure, resident in the country, whose taste disposes them to the pleasing and rational amusements of natural history, and who may be in possession of facts, authentic and interesting, relative to any of our birds which have not yet made their appearance in this work, the author again earnestly and respectfully addresses himself. Such is the barrenness of the best European works on the feathered tribes of the United States, and so numerous are the mistakes (to call them by the gentlest name) with which they are disfigured, that little has been, or indeed can be, derived from that quarter. On his own personal exertions and observation the Author has chiefly depended. But numerous as his subjects are, scattered over an immense territory, and pursuing

their vast and various migrations through different regions, as want of food or change of seasons inspires, unless Heaven would kindly accommodate him with wings, to follow as an aerial spy on their proceedings ; or, (which is more likely to happen), his fellow-citizens, lovers of their country, and well-wishers to its arts and literature, will condescend to communicate some of the numerous facts which many of them have, doubtless, witnessed among the feathered part of the creation around them ; his work will lose more than half its worth ; and, with all his endeavours, he must despair of doing complete justice to the subject.

Every communication, having this for its object, will be acknowledged with thankfulness ; and receive that degree of attention which the importance of the facts it contains may require. By such combined exertions, and reciprocity of information, we shall do honour to this branch of science ; and be enabled to escape, in part, that transatlantic and humiliating reproach, of being obliged to apply to Europe for an account and description of the productions of our own country.

Nevertheless, the well-earned meed of praise must not, cannot be withheld, from those worthy and indefatigable naturalists, who, impelled by an ardent love of science, became voluntary exiles from home and all its sweets, and subjected themselves to years of labour and peril, in personal efforts to examine and illustrate the natural history of this extensive Western empire. The "Insects of Georgia," by J. Abbot, published in London, in two volumes, folio ; the "Oaks of North America," by Michaux, published in Paris ; and the "History of the Forest Trees of North America," by F<sup>s</sup>. André-Michaux, son to the preceding, now publishing in Paris, and about to be republished in this city by Messrs Bradford & Inskip, are works of the first character in point of correct scientific description and splendid colored representations of their respective subjects. Such examples, particularly that of the latter, where elegance and utility are blended with the observations of a judicious and discriminating naturalist, cannot fail of being highly acceptable to the friends of science in every part of the world, and of animating our native citizens to similar exertions in exploring and illustrating the various other de-

partments of the natural history of their country. Well-authenticated facts deduced from careful observation, precise descriptions, and faithfully portrayed representations drawn from living nature, are the only true and substantial materials with which we can ever hope to erect and complete the great superstructure of science ;— without these all the learned speculations of mere closet theory are but “the baseless fabricks of a vision.”

For the direction of those who may be disposed to honour the Author with their correspondence, the following list is subjoined ; containing the common popular names of the most interesting of our Land Birds, whose history we have yet to detail, and of whose manners any authentic particulars will be gladly received.

Those to whose names an asterisk is prefixed being rare birds in Pennsylvania, well preserved-skins of them would be received as a very particular favour.

PHILADELPHIA, *February 12th, 1811.\**

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## ESSAY V.

### THE PROGRESS OF THE WORK : INTEREST OF THE STUDY.

In presenting this fourth volume of the American Ornithology to its numerous and highly respectable subscribers, the Author is happy to be able to inform them, that the success which he has met with in his late shooting excursions, particularly along our Atlantic coast ; and the arrangements made with the engravers and others engaged in the work, will enable him to publish the remaining volumes with more punctuality than it has hitherto been possible for him to do. At the same time, the correct execution of the plates will be rendered more secure, by the constant

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\* ' American Ornithology ' (1811) Vol. III., pp. v.-xiv.—G.

superintendance of the Author ; and by the whole of the coloring being performed in his own room, under his immediate inspection. The great precision requisite in this last process, and the difficulty of impressing on the mind of every one whose assistance was found necessary, similar ideas of neatness and accuracy, have been a constant source of anxiety to the Author, and of much loss and delay. These difficulties have at length been surmounted, by procuring the services of two able assistants, whose skill and attention leave little further to fear in this department.

Among other improvements which the Author has endeavoured to introduce, is that of printing the plates in colors ; an art in which the French at present excel ; and which, when judiciously employed in works of this kind, gives great softness and effect to the plumage. These and various other arrangements have added heavily to the expense of the publication ; but his chief object being a faithful imitation of Nature, worthy the esteem of that distinguished portion of the community by whom it is supported, and honourable to the arts and literature of the nation, no obstacles of a mere pecuniary nature have been permitted to stand in the way. Where he fails, (as he often will,) want of adequate talents alone must plead his excuse.

The approbation which this attempt, to collect and portray the feathered tribes of the United States, has been honoured with, both in this country and in Europe, gratifying as it is to the feelings of the Author, convinces him, how much still remains to be done, before he can hope fully to merit these generous encomiums. It is not sufficient that a work of this kind should speak to the eye alone, its portraits should reach the heart, particularly of our youth, who are generally much interested with subjects of this kind. By entering minutely into the manners of this beautiful portion of the animate creation, and faithfully exhibiting them as they are, sentiments of esteem, humanity and admiration will necessarily result. It is chiefly owing to ignorance of their true character, that some of our thoughtless youth delight in wantonly tormenting and destroying those innocent warblers ; for who can either respect, pity or admire what they are totally unacquainted with ? I am persuaded that no child would injure and abuse even

a harmless worm, with whose economy and mode of life he was intimately acquainted. Those few birds who, by their innocent familiarity, have made themselves generally known, are as generally regarded. Witness the Blue-bird of the United States, and the Robin Red-breast of Britain, equally beloved by the boys of both countries.

To the philosopher, as well as the naturalist, and to every man of feeling, the manners, migration, and immense multitudes of birds in this country, are subjects of interesting and instructive curiosity. From the twenty-first day of March to the first of May, it might with truth be asserted, that at least one hundred million of birds enter Pennsylvania from the south; part on their way farther north, and part to reside during the season. This is no extravagant computation, since it is allowing only about four hundred individuals to each square mile; tho' even those resident for the summer would probably average many more. Our forests at that season are every where stored with them; and even the most gloomy swamps and morasses swarm with their respective feathered tenants, and the seats of cultivation contain a still greater proportion. In Mr. Bartram's botanic garden, and the adjoining buildings, comprehending an extent of little more than eight acres, the Author has ascertained, during his present summer residence there, that not less than fifty-one\* pair of birds took up their abode, and built their nests within that space. Almost all of these arrived between the above periods; besides multitudes of passengers. Every morning (for evening, night and morning seem their

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\* These consisted of

5 pair of House Wrens,	1 pair of Common Pee-wees,
2 ——— Baltimore Orioles,	1 ——— Indigo Buntings,
2 ——— Orchard Orioles,	1 ——— Yellow-breasted Chats,
3 ——— Summer Yellow Warblers,	4 ——— Purple Grakles,
5 ——— Catbirds,	5 ——— Song Sparrows,
1 ——— White-eyed Flycatchers,	3 ——— Chipping Sparrows,
2 ——— Warbling Flycatchers,	2 ——— Chimney Swallows,
1 ——— Robins,	1 ——— Purple Martins,
1 ——— Swamp Sparrows,	10 ——— Burn Swallows.
1 ——— Wood Pee-wees,	

Besides several others whose nests could not be found, but which were frequently observed about; such as the Blue Jay, the Humming-bird, Scarlet Tanager, &c., &c.



favorite hours of passage) some new strangers were heard or seen flitting through the arbours, until one general concert seemed to prevail from every part of the garden.

That these migrations are not performed in one continued journey, but in occasional and leisurely progression, seems highly probable, from the length of time that usually elapses between their first entering the southern boundaries of the United States, and their appearance in the northern or middle States. In 1809 the Purple Martins arrived at Savannah on the second day of March; but did not reach Philadelphia until the twenty-fifth day of the same month. The Catbirds were first heard at Savannah early in March; but did not arrive in the neighbourhood of Philadelphia until late in April. Many other species, whose arrival were noted in the same season, at both places, varied from three to five weeks; among which latter number was the Humming-bird, which arrived at Savannah about the twenty-third of March; but rarely reaches Philadelphia much before the first of May. In short, these little winged pilgrims, some of whom have several thousand miles of country to pass over, in their progressive advances north, seem to follow in the joyous train of Spring, hailing her with their melody, while she unfolds the infant leaves, spreads a carpet of living green over the smiling fields, and diffuses warmth and balmy fragrance over the face of Nature. By the first of May the whole woods are vocal; and the great business of building and incubation is going rapidly forward. These sexual attachments are frequently formed before the arrival of the parties, and some doubtless exist for several years. During its continuance the most perfect chastity seems to be observed, each being wholly devoted to the other. A spot is selected and mutually agreed on, for the site of their nest, which is constructed by the joint labor and ingenuity of both. At this interesting season, how assiduous are their labors! How patient does the zealous female sit, for days and weeks, while the habitual love of activity, the charms of the season, and every object around seem to tempt her away! And with what vigilance does her faithful partner stand sentinel on some pinnacle near the spot, to guard her from surprise, and to enliven the tedious hours with his cheerful and animated song! Visiting her in her confine-

ment, as an affectionate husband would a beloved wife, feeding her from his mouth, and warbling to her in strains of soothing gratulation! When the naked, feeble, and helpless brood first appear, every sensation of affection becomes more exquisite, more ardent and active. They are never left for a moment alone, one parent usually watching their slumbers, while the other is in search of food for their support. All night long, as well as during the cool damps of morning, and on the appearance of the least inclemency of weather, she covers them with her body to secure them from the slightest cold. Should her mate fall by the cruelty of man, she redoubles all her care; seems wholly engrossed by her charge; and is herself their sole supporter, friend and protector. When at last danger comes suddenly, her affection is never taken by surprise; she instantly throws herself between them and the enemy, invites all his attention on herself; and saves their lives at the expense of her own.

Is it possible for a rational and intelligent being to contemplate these scenes without interest and without admiration? Innocency has charms that arrest almost every beholder, and can we survey the sportive and endearing manners of these with indifference? Men join with reverence in praises to the great Creator, and can they listen with contempt to the melodious strains, the hymns of praise, which these joyful little creatures offer up every morning to the Fountain of light and life? Who can contemplate, unmoved, the distress of a fond mother for her dying infant? And has that tender mother no claims on our sympathy, who, unprotected herself, prefers death rather than her young should suffer? Is tenderness of heart, fidelity, and parental affection, only lovely when they exist among men? Oh no! it is impossible!—Those virtues that are esteemed the highest ornaments of our nature, seem to be emanations from the Divinity Himself; and may be traced in many of the humblest and least regarded of his creatures.

ALEXANDER WILSON.

PHILADELPHIA, *September 12th, 1811.* \*

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\* 'American Ornithology,' (1811) Vol. IV., pp., v.-x.—G.

## ESSAY VI.

## PREDECESSORS, AND FELLOW-WORKERS, AND DIFFICULTIES.

The fifth volume of this extensive work is submitted to the public with all due deference and respect ; and the Author having now, as he conjectures, reached the middle-stage of his journey, or, in traveller's phrase, 'the half-way house,' may be permitted to indulge himself with a slight retrospect of the ground he has already traversed, and a glimpse of that which still lies before him.

The whole of our Land Birds (those of the sixth volume included, which are nearly ready for the press) have now been figured and described, probably a very few excepted, which, it is hoped, will also shortly be obtained. These have been gleaned up from an extensive territory of woods and fields, unfrequented forests, solitary ranges of mountains, swamps and morasses, by successive journies and excursions of more than ten thousand miles. With all the industry which a single individual could possibly exert, several species have doubtless escaped him. These future expeditions may enable him to procure ; or the kindness of his distant literary friends obligingly supply him with.

In endeavouring to collect materials for describing truly and fully our feathered tribes, he has frequently had recourse to the works of those European naturalists who have written on the subject ; he has examined their pages with an eager and inquisitive eye ; but his researches in that quarter have been but too frequently repaid with disappointment, and often with disgust. On the subject of the manners and migrations of our birds, which, in fact, constitute almost the only instructive and interesting parts of their history, all is a barren and a dreary waste. A few vague and formal particulars of their size, specific marks, &c., accompanied sometimes with figured representations that would seem rather intended to caricature than to illustrate their originals, is all that the greater part of them can boast of. Nor are these the most exceptionable parts of their performances ; the novelty of fable, and the wildness of fanciful theory, are frequently substi-

tuted for realities ; and conjectures instead of facts called up for their support. Prejudice, as usual, has in numerous instances united with its parent, ignorance, to depreciate and treat with contempt what neither of them understood ; and the whole interesting assemblage of the feathered tribes of this vast continent, which in richness of plumage, and in strength, sweetness, and variety of song, will be found to exceed those of any other quarter of the globe, are little known save in the stuffed cabinets of the curious, and among the abstruse pages and technical catalogues of dry systematic writers.

From these barren and musty records, the Author of the present work has a thousand times turned, with a delight bordering on adoration, to the magnificent repository of the woods and fields—the Grand Aviary of Nature. In this divine school he has studied from no vulgar copy ; but from the works of the GREAT MASTER OF CREATION Himself ; and has read with rapture the lessons of his wisdom, His goodness, and His love, in the conformation, the habitudes, melody and migrations of this beautiful portion of the work of His hands. To communicate as correct ideas of these as his feeble powers are capable of ; and thus, from objects that in our rural walks almost everywhere present themselves, to deduce not only amusement and instruction, but the highest incitements to virtue and piety, have been the Author's most anxious and ardent wish. On many of his subjects, indeed, it has not been in his power to say much. The recent discovery of some, and the solitary and secluded habits of others, have opposed great obstacles to his endeavours in this respect. But a time is approaching when these obstacles will no longer exist. When the population of this immense western Republic will have diffused itself over every acre of ground fit for the comfortable habitation of man,—when farms, villages, towns, and glittering cities—thick as the stars in a winter's evening—overspread the face of our beloved country, and every hill, valley, and stream, has its favorite name, its native flocks and rural inhabitants,—then, not a warbler shall flit through our thickets but its name, its notes, and habits will be familiar to all, repeated in their sayings, and celebrated in their village songs. At that happy period, should

any vestige or memory of the present publication exist, be it known to our more enlightened posterity, as some apology for the deficiencies of its Author, that in the period in which he wrote three-fourths of our feathered tribes were altogether unknown even to the proprietors of the woods which they frequented; that without patron, fortune, or recompence, he brought the greater part of these from the obscurity of ages, gave to each "a local habitation and a name"; collected from personal observation whatever of their characters and manners seemed deserving of attention; and delineated their forms and features in their native colors, as faithfully as he could, as records, at least, of their existence.

In treating of those birds more generally known, I have endeavoured to do impartial justice to their respective characters. Ignorance and stubborn-rooted opinions, even in this country, have rendered some odious that are eminently useful, and involved the others in fable and mystery which, in themselves, are plain and open as day. To remove prejudices when they oppose themselves to the influence of humanity is a difficult, but, when effected, a most pleasing employment. If, therefore, in divesting this part of the Natural History of our country of many of its fables and most forbidding features, and thus enabling our youth to become more intimately acquainted with this charming portion of the feathered creation, I should have succeeded in multiplying their virtuous enjoyments, and in rendering them more humane to those little choristers, how gratifying to my heart would be the reflection! For to me it appears that, of all inferior creatures, Heaven seems to have intended birds as the most cheerful associates of man, to soothe and exhilarate him in his labours by their varied melody, of which no other creature but man is capable; to prevent the increase of those supernumerary hosts of insects that would soon consume the products of his industry; to glean up the refuse of his fields "that nothing be lost," and, what is of much more interest, to be to him the most endearing examples of the tenderest connubial love and parental affection.

As to what still remains to be done, let the following slight

sketch suffice. The number of plates for each volume being fixed, the size of the volume will depend, as heretofore, on the characters of the birds being more or less interesting. The present is more so than the preceding, and contains a number of noted birds whose histories will be found to be fully detailed. A wish to reduce as few of the drawings from the full size as possible, may sometimes lessen the number of figures; but the value of those given will always, in this case, be increased by the greater pains and expense bestowed on their execution.

In the sixth volume, the Woodcock, Snipe, Partridge, Ruffed Grouse or Pheasant, the Rail, the beautiful Ground Dove of the Southern States, numbers of Hawks (some of them very rare), Owls, Buzzards, Vultures, &c., &c., will make their appearance. The engravers being already considerably advanced with these, it is confidently hoped that no delay will be experienced beyond the regular time of publication.

The seventh volume will introduce the Grallæ or Waders, a numerous order of birds in the United States. The greater part of these being too large to be represented in full size, will be reduced from the original drawings by the Author himself with as much precision as he is capable of, and in such manner that all the figures exhibited on the same plate will be reduced by the same scale; thereby preserving a correct idea of their relative as well as apparent natural magnitude. Some of these are new, and peculiarities will be pointed out in many of them which are truly singular and interesting. The tenth volume, with a complete index, and some other requisite matters, with perhaps an appendix comprehending stragglers of various classes, will probably complete the whole.

The publication of an original work of this kind in this country has been attended with difficulties, great, and, it must be confessed, sometimes discouraging to the Author, whose only reward hitherto has been the favourable opinion of his fellow-citizens, and the pleasure of the pursuit. The support, however, which he has uniformly received from the artists and others engaged in the work has fully equalled his expectations, and demands his public and grateful acknowledgments. The engravings will be a lasting



monument to the merits of Messrs. Lawson, Murray, and Warnicke; and the elegance of the letterpress, which even in Europe has excited admiration, does the highest honor to the taste of the founders, Messrs. Binney & Ronaldson, as well as to the professional talents and constant attention of the printers, Messrs. R. & W. Carr; while the unrivalled excellence of the paper, from the manufactory of Mr. Amies, proves what American ingenuity is capable of producing when properly encouraged.

Let but the generous hand of patriotism be stretched forth to assist and cherish the rising arts and literature of our country, and both will most assuredly, and that at no remote period, shoot forth, increase, and flourish with a vigor, a splendor, and usefulness inferior to no other on earth.

ALEXANDER WILSON.

PHILADELPHIA, *Feb. 12th, 1812.* \*

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## ESSAY VII.

### THE LAND BIRDS COMPLETED.

Having at length collected, drawn, and described all the Land Birds of the United States with which I am acquainted (a very few excepted, which will appear in the succeeding volume or in the Appendix, as good specimens of them can be obtained), I now present the reader with a list of the whole, arranged in systematic order, with references to the pages of this work where the history of each is detailed. The blanks unavoidably left for the few unpublished ones may be filled up hereafter with the pen or pencil. Those printed in italics are new species not heretofore figured or described.

The foregoing numerous assemblage forms the first grand division of our Ornithology; the second and last is composed of the Waders and Web-footed, a vast and various multitude, sub-

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\* 'American Ornithology' (1812) Vol. V., pp. v.-x.—G.

sisting chiefly on the bounty of the ocean and the gleanings of our rivers, lakes, and marshes. These will be introduced to the particular acquaintance of the reader in the succeeding volumes of this work.

Hitherto, the good wishes of his friends and the distinguished approbation of his beloved country have accompanied the Author in his humble endeavours to do justice to this portion of its Natural History. Deeply sensible of this goodness, he will only say that in what still remains to be done it will be his constant aim so to execute it as not to disappoint expectation.

ALEXANDER WILSON.

PHILADELPHIA, *August 12th, 1812.* \*

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## ESSAY VIII.

### THE WATER BIRDS : THE WONDERS OF ORNITHOLOGY.

We now enter upon the second grand division of our subject, Water Birds ; and on that particular class or order, usually denominated *Gralle*, or Waders. Here a new assemblage of scenery, altogether different from the former, presents itself for our contemplation. Instead of rambling through the leafy labyrinths of umbrageous groves, fragrance-breathing orchards, fields and forests, we must now descend into the watery morass, and mosquito swamp ; traverse the windings of the river, the rocky cliffs, bays and inlets of the sea-beat shore, listening to the wild and melancholy screams of a far different multitude ; a multitude less intimate indeed with man, tho not less useful ; as they contribute liberally to his amusement, to the abundance of his table, the warmth of his bed, and the comforts of his repose.

In contemplating the various, singular and striking peculiarities of these, we shall every where find traces of an infinitely wise and beneficent Creator. In every deviation of their parts from the common conformation of such as are designed for the land alone,

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\* 'American Ornithology' (1812) Vol. VI., pp. v.-xviii.—G.

we may discover a wisdom of design never erring, never failing in the means it provides for the accomplishment of its purpose. Instead, therefore, of imitating the wild presumption, or rather profanity, of those who have censured as rude, defective or deformed, whatever, in those and other organized beings accorded not with their narrow conceptions ; let it be ours to search with humility into the intention of those particular conformations ; and thus, entering as it were into the designs of the Deity, we shall see in every part of the work of His hands abundant cause to exclaim with the rapturous poet of Nature,

" O Wisdom infinite ! Goodness immense !  
And Love that passeth knowledge !"

In the present volume, the greater part of such of the Waders as belong to the territories of the United States, will be found delineated and described. This class naturally forms an intermediate link between the Land Birds and the Web-footed, partaking, in their form, food, and habits, of the characters of both ; and equally deserving of our regard and admiration. Tho formed for traversing watery situations, often in company with the Swimmers, they differ from these last in one circumstance common to Land Birds, the separation of the toes nearly to their origin ; and in the habit of never venturing beyond their depth. On the other hand, they are furnished with legs of extraordinary length, bare for a considerable space above the knees, by the assistance of which they are enabled to walk about in the water in pursuit of their prey, where the others are obliged to swim ; and also with necks of corresponding length, by means of which they can search the bottom for food, where the others must have recourse to diving. The bills of one family (the Herons) are strong, sharp pointed, and of considerable length ; while the flexibility of the neck, the rapidity of its action, and remarkable acuteness of sight, wonderfully fit them for watching, striking, and securing their prey. Those whose food consists of more feeble and sluggish insects, that lie concealed deeper in the mud, are provided with bills of still greater extension, the rounded extremity of which possesses such nice sensibility, as to enable its possessor to detect its prey

the instant it comes in contact with it, tho' altogether beyond the reach of sight.

Other families of this same order, formed for traversing the sandy sea-beach in search of small shell-fish that lurk just below the surface, have the bills and legs necessarily shorter ; but their necessities requiring them to be continually on the verge of the flowing or retreating wave, the activity of their motions forms a striking contrast with the patient habits of the Heron tribe, who sometimes stand fixed and motionless, for hours together, by the margin of the pool or stream, watching to surprize their scaly prey.

Some few again, whose favourite food lies at the soft oozy bottom of shallow pools, have the bill so extremely slender and delicate, as to be altogether unfit for penetrating either the muddy shores, or sandy sea beach ; tho' excellently adapted for its own particular range, where lie the various kinds of food destined for their subsistence. Of this kind are the *Avocets* of the present volume, who not only wade with great activity in considerably deep water ; but having the feet nearly half webbed, combine in one the characters of both wader and swimmer.

It is thus, that by studying the living manners of the different tribes in their native retreats, we not only reconcile the singularity of some parts of their conformation with divine wisdom ; but are enabled to comprehend the reason of many others, which the pride of certain closet-naturalists has arraigned as lame, defective and deformed.

One observation more may be added : the migrations of this class of birds are more generally known and acknowledged than that of most others. Their comparatively large size and immense multitudes, render their regular periods of migration (so strenuously denied to some others) notorious along the whole extent of our sea-coast. Associating, feeding and travelling together in such prodigious and noisy numbers, it would be no less difficult to conceal their arrival, passage and departure, than that of a vast army through a thickly peopled country. Constituting also, as many of them do, an article of food and interest to man, he naturally becomes more intimately acquainted with their habits and retreats,

than with those feeble and minute kinds which offer no such inducement, and perform their migrations with more silence, in scattered parties, unheeded or overlooked. Hence many of the Waders can be traced from their summer abodes, the desolate regions of Greenland and Spitzbergen, to the fens and sea-shores of the West India Islands and South America, the usual places of their winter retreat, while those of the Purple Martin and common Swallow still remain, in vulgar belief, wrapt up in all the darkness of mystery.

The figures in the plates which accompany this volume have been generally reduced to one half the dimensions of the living birds. In the succeeding volumes where some of the subjects measure upwards of five feet in height, one general standard of reduction will be used, by which means the comparative size of each species can be easily ascertained at first glance; and a greater number introduced in each plate, so as to comprehend the whole of our ornithology in nine volumes, being one less than originally projected.

ALEXANDER WILSON.

PHILADELPHIA, *March 1st., 1813.* \*

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### ESSAY IX.

THE AUTHOR DEAD: THE WORK LEFT TO BE COMPLETED.

The patrons of the "American Ornithology" are now presented with the eighth volume of that work, which, unfortunately for the interest of Science, was left unfinished by its ingenious and indefatigable Author. It was the intention of Mr. Wilson to complete the whole in nine volumes; and he was rapidly advancing to a close, when he was suddenly arrested in his honourable and useful career by a mandate from that Power who so often frustrates human purposes, and whose mighty scheme of Providence no created being can comprehend.

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\* 'American Ornithology,' (1813) Vol. VII., pp. v.-ix.—G.

The historical part of the present volume was fully completed and printed off, and all the plates, except one, were engraved, under the superintendence of the Author himself. But from the defection of those on whom he had relied for assistance in the coloring of his subjects, and the great difficulty of immediately procuring others competent to the task, that branch of the work did not keep pace with the rest; and hence the publication of the volume has been delayed by causes beyond the control of those on whom, at Mr. Wilson's death, his affairs devolved. But this delay, we trust, has been of benefit to the work, as it enabled us to employ an artist who formerly gained the confidence of the Author by his skill and attention to the duties assigned him, and who has given assurance of continuing his assistance until the whole is completed. With such a coadjutor, our labors in that department will be considerably lightened; and, with deference, we hope that the public will not so readily perceive the absence of that hand whose delicate touches imparted hues and animation to the pictured "denizens of the air," which might almost vie with the interesting originals themselves.

The present volume contains much valuable matter; and, when viewed as the last fruit of the fertile and philosophical mind of its amiable Author, will be doubtless received with no ordinary degree of attention. In it, we are presented with correct and highly-finished delineations of the whole of that interesting and useful tribe, the *Anas* genus,\* that frequent our waters. The histories of some are necessarily imperfect, as they are but partially known and seldom permit an opportunity of investigation. Others from their habits not exciting much interest, have been too much neglected by naturalists; and the biographer of their simple lives was condemned, however repugnant to his wishes and intentions, to pass them over in a brief and unsatisfactory manner. But the historian has had it in his power to confer that justice on a few whose merits have been considered by ornithologists and connoisseurs as of the first order, to which they are fairly entitled;

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\* With the exception of the Swan, a good specimen of which Mr. W. was never enabled to procure.



and his faithful recitals, we trust, will amply reward attention, as neither pains nor expense has been spared to obtain correct information relating to them which he knew would be justly valued by a discerning and respectable community.

Of the domestic habits of the greater part of the subjects above referred to, the scientific world unfortunately remains in ignorance. Formed by nature with strength of wing capable of supporting immense aerial journies, the Ducks, in the vernal season, impelled by that mysterious principle vaguely termed instinct, prepare to seek those climes which will afford them an asylum during the important period of incubation, and where they and their offspring may escape the observation of destructive man. To the dreary regions of the north these wanderers then repair; each family, probably, occupying those peculiar districts which have been the heritage of their progenitors for ages, and which furnish them with an abundance of food particularly adapted to their wants, and to the rearing of their young. In that season, could the zealous naturalist safely tread those unknown shores, what a rich harvest would reward his enterprise and research! He would there behold, on their own native streams, in all the pride of independence, those various acquaintance whose periodical visits to his section of the globe he never failed to welcome. He would explore their favourite haunts; trace the operations of Nature in the important, consecutive work of perpetuating their kind; note their simple manners, before a knowledge of the lords of creation had taught them vigilance and stratagem; and, finally, behold them congregating in prodigious multitudes to prepare, as the season of night and storms approaches, to migrate to those regions where their wants may continue to be supplied, and where it seems to be a wise provision of the bountiful Creator of all things they themselves may contribute to the sustenance and comfort of a portion of the human race. But to such an enterprise, Nature has opposed formidable barriers, such as it appears she does not intend that we shall surmount; thereby intimating to us that she fears to indulge a curiosity which might ultimately prove subversive of her general plan, by relinquishing to the insatiable dominion of a few what was kindly intended for the benefit of all.

The publication of the eighth volume has been attended with increased expense, as the nature of the figures and the crowded manner in which the Author found himself necessitated to introduce them in order that nine volumes should comprise the whole of our Ornithology have compelled the artists to devote more time to the faithful discharge of their trust. How well they have succeeded in doing justice to their subjects, it is not necessary for us to declare; as the public, in matters of taste, indulge a right of judging for themselves. But it is proper to state that the present volume was a favorite with its Author, and he had formed the resolution of devoting to it a more than ordinary share of his personal attention,—intending thereby to afford to his patrons a proof that there was no falling off from his original elegance, and to the friends of the arts and lovers of science a brilliant illustration of what unwearied industry could accomplish, when associated with zeal and talent. Mr. Wilson intended coloring the chief part of the plates himself; but that design, which sprang from the most refined sense of duty and so fondly cherished, he did not live to accomplish.

The succeeding volume will be published without delay, the plates for it being all engraved. In that, the public may expect a biographical account of Mr. Wilson, compiled from the most authentic materials in the possession of his executors, a complete index to the whole, and a list of subscribers, which will conclude the "American Ornithology."

PHILADELPHIA, *January 19th, 1814.*\*

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\* 'American Ornithology' (1814) Vol. VIII., pp. iii.-vii. By George Ord.—G.

## DESCRIPTIVE ESSAYS.

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### ESSAY X.

#### OF THE WHITE-HEADED OR BALD EAGLE.\*

This distinguished bird, as he is the most beautiful of his tribe in this part of the world, and the adopted emblem of our country, is entitled to particular notice. He is represented in the plate of one-third his natural size, and was drawn from one of the largest and most perfect specimens I have yet met with. In the background is seen a distant view of the celebrated Cataract of Niagara,—a noted place of resort for these birds, as well on account of the fish procured there as for the numerous carcasses of squirrels, deer, bears, and various other animals, that in their attempts to cross the river above the Falls have been dragged into the current, and precipitated down that tremendous gulf, where, among the rocks that bound the Rapids below, they furnish a rich repast for the Vulture, the Raven, and the Bald Eagle—the subject of the present account. This bird has been long known to naturalists, being common to both continents, and occasionally met with from a very high northern latitude to the borders of the torrid zone, but chiefly in the vicinity of the sea, and along the shores and cliffs of our lakes and large rivers. Formed by Nature for braving the severest cold; feeding equally on the produce of the sea and of the land;

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\* The epithet *bald*, applied to this species, whose head is thickly covered with feathers, is equally improper and absurd with the titles Goatsucker, Kingfisher, &c., bestowed on others, and seems to have been occasioned by the white appearance of the head when contrasted with the dark colour of the rest of the plumage. The appellation, however, being now almost universal, is retained in the following pages.

possessing powers of flight capable of outstripping even the tempests themselves ; unawed by anything but man, and, from the ethereal heights to which he soars, looking abroad at one glance on an immeasurable expanse of forests, fields, lakes, and ocean deep below him, he appears indifferent to the little localities of change of seasons ; as in a few minutes he can pass from summer to winter, from the lower to the higher regions of the atmosphere, the abode of eternal cold ; and thence descend, at will, to the torrid or the arctic regions of the earth. He is, therefore, found at all seasons in the countries he inhabits ; but prefers such places as have been mentioned above, from the great partiality he has for fish.

In procuring these, he displays, in a very singular manner, the genius and energy of his character, which is fierce, contemplative, daring, and tyrannical,—attributes not exerted but on particular occasions, but when put forth, overpowering all opposition. Elevated on the high dead limb of some gigantic tree that commands a wide view of the neighbouring shore and ocean, he seems calmly to contemplate the motions of the various feathered tribes that pursue their busy avocations below : the snow-white Gulls slowly winnowing the air ; the busy *Tringæ* coursing along the sands ; trains of Ducks streaming over the surface ; silent and watchful Cranes, intent and wading ; clamorous Crows ; and all the winged multitudes that subsist by the bounty of this vast liquid magazine of Nature. High over all these hovers one whose action instantly arrests all his attention. By his wide curvature of wing and sudden suspension in air, he knows him to be the Fish-hawk, settling over some devoted victim of the deep. His eye kindles at the sight, and balancing himself, with half-opened wings on the branch, he watches the result. Down, rapid as an arrow from heaven, descends the distant object of his attention, the roar of its wings reaching the ear as it disappears in the deep, making the surges foam around ! At this moment, the eager looks of the Eagle are all ardor ; and, levelling his neck for flight, he sees the Fish-hawk once more emerge, struggling with his prey, and mounting in the air with screams of exultation. These are the signal for our hero, who, launching into the air, instantly gives chase, [and] soon gains on the Fish-hawk. Each exerts his utmost

to mount above the other, displaying in these rencontres the most elegant and sublime aerial evolutions. The unincumbered Eagle rapidly advances, and is just on the point of reaching his opponent when, with a sudden scream, probably of despair and honest execration, the latter drops his fish. The Eagle, poisoning himself for a moment as if to take a more certain aim, descends like a whirlwind, snatches it in his grasp ere it reaches the water, and bears his ill-gotten booty silently away to the woods.

These predatory attacks and defensive manœuvres of the Eagle and the Fish-hawk are matters of daily observation along the whole of our sea-board, from Georgia to New England, and frequently excite great interest in the spectators. Sympathy, however, on this as on most other occasions, generally sides with the honest and laborious sufferer in opposition to the attacks of power, injustice, and rapacity,—qualities for which our hero is so generally notorious, and which, in his superior, Man, are certainly detestable. As for the feelings of the poor fish, they seem altogether out of the question.

When driven, as he sometimes is by the combined courage and perseverance of the Fish-hawks, from their neighbourhood, and forced to hunt for himself, he retires more inland in search of young pigs, of which he destroys great numbers. In the lower parts of Virginia and North Carolina, where the inhabitants raise vast herds of those animals, complaints of this kind are very general against him. He also destroys young lambs in the early part of Spring, and will sometimes attack old sickly sheep, aiming furiously at their eyes.

In corroboration of the remarks I have myself made on the manners of the Bald Eagle, many accounts have reached me from various persons of respectability, living on or near our sea coast. The substance of all these I shall endeavour to incorporate with the present account.

Mr. John L. Gardiner, who resides on an island of three thousand acres about three miles from the eastern point of Long Island, from which it is separated by Gardiner's Bay, and who has consequently many opportunities of observing the habits of these birds, has favored me with a number of interesting particulars on

this subject, for which I beg leave thus publicly to return my grateful acknowledgment.

“The Bald Eagles,” says this gentleman, “remain on this island during the whole winter. They can be most easily discovered on evenings by their loud snoring while asleep on high oak trees; and when awake, their hearing seems to be nearly as good as their sight. I think I mentioned to you that I had myself seen one flying with a lamb ten days old, and which it dropped on the ground from about ten or twelve feet high. The struggling of the lamb, more than its weight, prevented its carrying it away. My running, hallooing, and being very near, might prevent its completing its design. It had broke the back in the act of seizing it, and I was under the necessity of killing it outright to prevent its misery. The lamb’s dam seemed astonished to see its innocent offspring borne off into the air by a bird.

“I was lately told,” continues Mr. Gardiner, “by a man of truth, that he saw an Eagle rob a Hawk of its fish, and the Hawk seemed so enraged as to fly down at the Eagle, while the Eagle very deliberately, in the air, threw himself partly over on his back, and, while he grasped with one foot the fish, extended the other to threaten or seize the Hawk. I have known several Hawks unite to attack the Eagle, but never knew a single one to do it. The Eagle seems to regard the Hawks as the Hawks do the King-birds—only as teasing, troublesome fellows.”

From the same intelligent and obliging friend, I lately received a well-preserved skin of the Bald Eagle, which, from its appearance and the note that accompanied it, seems to have belonged to a very formidable individual. “It was shot,” says Mr. Gardiner, “last winter on this island, and weighed thirteen pounds, measured three feet in length, and seven from tip to tip of the expanded wings; was extremely fierce-looking; tho’ wounded, would turn his back to no one; fastened his claws into the head of a dog, and was with difficulty disengaged. I have rode on horseback within five or six rods of one, who by his bold demeanour,—raising his feathers, &c.,—seemed willing to dispute the ground with its owner. The crop of the present was full of mutton, from my part blood Merinos, and his intestines contained



feathers which he probably devoured with a Duck or Winter Gull, as I observed an entire foot and leg of some water fowl. I had two killed previous to this, which weighed ten pounds avoirdupois each."

The intrepidity of character mentioned above, may be farther illustrated by the following fact, which occurred a few years ago near Great Egg Harbour, New Jersey :—A woman, who happened to be weeding in the garden, had set her child down near to amuse itself while she was at work ; when a sudden and extraordinary rushing sound, and a scream from her child, alarmed her, and, starting up, she beheld the infant thrown down and dragged some few feet, and a large Bald Eagle bearing off a fragment of its frock, which being the only part seized, and giving way, providentially saved the life of the infant.

The appetite of the Bald Eagle, tho' habituated to long fasting, is of the most voracious and often the most indelicate kind. Fish, when he can obtain them, are preferred to all other fare. Young lambs and pigs are dainty morsels, and made free with on all favorable occasions. Ducks, Geese, Gulls, and other sea fowl, are also seized with avidity. The most putrid carrion, when nothing better can be had, is acceptable ; and the collected groups of gormandizing Vultures, on the approach of this dignified personage, instantly disperse, and make way for their master, waiting his departure in sullen silence, and at a respectful distance, on the adjacent trees.

In one of those partial migrations of tree-squirrels that sometimes take place in our western forests, many thousands of them were drowned in attempting to cross the Ohio ; and a certain place, not far from Wheeling, a prodigious number of their dead bodies were floated to the shore by an eddy. Here the Vultures assembled in great force, and had regaled themselves for some time, when a Bald Eagle made his appearance and took sole possession of the premises, keeping the whole Vultures at their proper distance for several days. He has also been seen navigating the same river on a floating carrion, though scarcely raised above the surface of the water, and tugging at the carcass, regardless of snags, sawyers, planters, or shallows. He sometimes carries his

tyranny to great extremes against the Vultures. In hard times, when food happens to be scarce, should he accidentally meet with one of these who has its craw crammed with carrion, he attacks it fiercely in the air; the cowardly Vulture instantly disgorges, and the delicious contents are snatched up by the Eagle before they reach the ground.

The nest of this species is generally fixed on a very large and lofty tree, often in a swamp or morass, and difficult to be ascended. On some noted tree of this description, often a pine or cypress, the Bald Eagle builds, year after year, for a long series of years. When both male and female have been shot from the nest, another pair has soon after taken possession. The nest is large, being added to and repaired every season, until it becomes a black prominent mass observable at a considerable distance. It is formed of large sticks, sods, earthy rubbish, hay, moss, &c. Many have stated to me that the female lays first a single egg, and that, after having sat on it for some time, she lays another; when the first is hatched, the warmth of that, it is pretended, hatches the other. Whether this be correct or not, I cannot determine; but a very respectable gentleman of Virginia assured me that he saw a large tree cut down containing the nest of a Bald Eagle, in which were two young, one of which appeared nearly three times as large as the other. As a proof of their attachment to their young, a person near Norfolk informed me that, in clearing a piece of wood on his place, they met with a large dead pine tree on which was a Bald Eagle's nest and young. The tree being on fire more than half way up, and the flames rapidly ascending, the parent eagle darted around and among the flames until her plumage was so much injured that it was with difficulty she could make her escape, and even then she several times attempted to return to relieve her offspring.

No bird provides more abundantly for its young than the Bald Eagle. Fish are daily carried thither in numbers, so that they sometimes lie scattered round the tree, and the putrid smell of the nest may be distinguished at the distance of several hundred yards. The young are at first covered with a thick whitish or cream-colored cottony down; they gradually become of a gray color as

their plumage develops itself, continue of the brown gray until the third year, when the white begins to make its appearance on the head, neck, tail coverts, and tail; these by the end of the fourth year are completely white, or very slightly tinged with cream; the eye also is at first hazel, but gradually brightens into a brilliant straw color, with the white plumage of the head. Such at least was the gradual progress of this change, witnessed by myself, on a very fine specimen brought up by a gentleman, a friend of mine, who for a considerable time believed it to be what is usually called the Grey Eagle, and was much surprised at the gradual metamorphosis. This will account for the circumstance, so frequently observed, of the Grey and White-headed Eagle being seen together, both being, in fact, the same species in different stages of color according to their difference of age.

The flight of the Bald Eagle, when taken into consideration with the ardor and energy of his character, is noble and interesting. Sometimes the human eye can just discern him, like a minute speck, moving in slow curvatures along the face of the heavens, as if reconnoitring the earth at that immense distance. Sometimes he glides along in a direct horizontal line at a vast height with expanded and unmoving wings, till he gradually disappears in the distant blue ether. Seen gliding in easy circles over the high shores and mountainous cliffs that tower above the Hudson and Susquehanna, he attracts the eye of the intelligent voyager, and adds great interest to the scenery. At the great Cataract of Niagara, already mentioned, there rises from the gulf into which the Fall of the Horse-Shoe descends a stupendous column of smoke or spray reaching to the heavens, and moving off in large black clouds, according to the direction of the wind, forming a very striking and majestic appearance. The Eagles are here seen sailing about, sometimes losing themselves in this thick column and again reappearing in another place, with such ease and elegance of motion as renders the whole truly sublime.

High o'er the watery uproar, silent seen,  
Sailing sedate in majesty serene,  
Now midst the pillar'd spray sublimely lost,  
And now, emerging, down the Rapids tost,

Glides the Bald Eagle, gazing calm and slow  
O'er all the horrors of the scene below ;  
Intent alone to sate himself with blood  
From the torn victims of the raging flood.

The White-headed Eagle is three feet long and seven feet in extent ; the bill is of a rich yellow ; cere the same, slightly tinged with green ; mouth flesh-colored ; tip of the tongue bluish black ; the head, chief part of the neck, vent, tail coverts, and tail, are white in the perfect or old birds of both sexes,—in those under three years of age these parts are of a grey brown ; the rest of the plumage is deep dark brown, each feather tipped with pale brown—lightest on the shoulder of the wing, and darkest towards its extremities. The conformation of the wing is admirably adapted for the support of so large a bird. It measures two feet in breadth on the greater quills, and sixteen inches on the lesser ; the longest primaries are twenty inches in length, and upwards of one inch in circumference where they enter the skin ; the broadest secondaries are three inches in breadth across the vane ; the scapulars are very large and broad, spreading from the back to the wing, to prevent the air from passing through ; another range of broad flat feathers, from three to ten inches in length, also extend from the lower part of the breast to the wing below for the same purpose ; between these lies a deep triangular cavity ; the thighs are remarkably thick, strong, and muscular, covered with long feathers pointing backwards, usually called the femoral feathers ; the legs, which are covered half way below the knee before with dark brown downy feathers, are of a rich yellow, the color of ripe Indian corn ; feet the same ; claws blue black, very large and strong, particularly the inner one, which is considerably the largest ; soles very rough and warty ; the eye is sunk under a bony or cartilaginous projection of a pale yellow color, and is turned considerably forwards, not standing parallel with the cheeks ; the iris is of a bright straw color, pupil black.

The male is generally two or three inches shorter than the female ; the white on the head, neck, and tail being more tinged with yellowish, and its whole appearance less formidable ; the

brown plumage is also lighter, and the bird itself less daring than the female,—a circumstance common to almost all birds of prey.

The bird from which the foregoing drawing and description were taken, was shot near Great Egg Harbour, in the month of January. [It] was in excellent order, and weighed about eleven pounds. Dr. Samuel B. Smith of the city obliged me with a minute and careful dissection of it, from whose copious and very interesting notes on the subject I shall extract such remarks as are suited to the general reader.

“The Eagle you sent me for dissection was a beautiful female. It had two expansions of the gullet. The first principally composed of longitudinal bundles of fibre, in which (as the bird is ravenous and without teeth) large portions of unchewed meats are suffered to dissolve before they pass to the lower or proper stomach, which is membranous. I did not receive the bird in time enough to ascertain whether any chylification was effected by the juices from the vessels of this enlargement of the oesophagus. I think it probable that it also has a regurgitating or vomiting power, as the bird constantly swallows large quantities of indigestible substances, such as quills, hairs, &c. In this sac of the Eagle, I found the quill feathers of the small white gull; and in the true stomach, the tail and some of the breast feathers of the same bird and the dorsal vertebræ of a large fish. This excited some surprise, until you made me acquainted with the fact of its watching the Fish-Hawks, and robbing them of their prey. Thus we see, throughout the whole empire of animal life, power is almost always in a state of hostility to justice; and of the Deity only can it truly be said, that justice is commensurate with power!

“The Eagle has the several auxiliaries to digestion and assimilation in common with man. The liver was unusually large in your specimen. It secretes bile, which stimulates the intestines, prepares the chyle for blood, and by this very secretion of bile (as it is a deeply respiring animal) separates or removes some obnoxious principles from the blood. (See Dr. Rush’s admirable lecture on this important viscus in the human subject.) The intestines were also large, long, convolute, and supplied with numerous lacteal vessels, which differ little from those of men, except in color, which

was transparent. The kidneys were large, and seated on each side the vertebræ near the anus. They are also destined to secrete some offensive principles from the blood.

“The eggs were small and numerous; and, after a careful examination, I concluded that no sensible increase takes place in them till the particular season. This may account for the unusual excitement which prevails in these birds in the sexual intercourse. Why there are so many eggs, is a mystery. It is, perhaps, consistent with natural law that everything should be abundant; but from this bird it is said no more than two young are hatched in a season, consequently, no more eggs are wanted than a sufficiency to produce that effect. Are the eggs numbered originally, and is there no increase of number, but a gradual loss, till all are deposited? If so, the number may correspond to the long life and vigorous health of this noble bird. Why there is but two young in a season is easily explained. Nature has been studiously parsimonious of her physical strength, from whence the tribes of animals incapable to resist, derive security and confidence.”

The Eagle is said to live to a great age—sixty, eighty, and, as some assert, one hundred years. This circumstance is remarkable, when we consider the seeming intemperate habits of the bird; sometimes fasting, thro necessity, for several days, and at other times gorging itself with animal food till its craw swells out the plumage of that part, forming a large protuberance on the breast. This, however, is its natural food, and for these habits its whole organisation is particularly adapted. It has not, like men, invented rich wines, ardent spirits, and a thousand artificial poisons, in the form of soup, sauces, and sweetmeats. Its food is simple, it indulges freely, uses great exercise, breathes the purest air, is healthy, vigorous, and long-lived. The lords of the creation themselves might derive some useful hints from these facts, were they not already, in general, too wise, or too proud, to learn from their inferiors, the fowls of the air and beasts of the field.—[*Vol. IV.*, pp. 89-100.]



## ESSAY XI.

## OF THE BLUE JAY.

This elegant bird, which, as far as I can learn, is peculiar to North America, is distinguished as a kind of beau among the feathered tenants of our woods by the brilliancy of his dress ; and like most other coxcombs, makes himself still more conspicuous by his loquacity and the oddness of his tones and gestures. The Jay measures eleven inches in length ; the head is ornamented with a crest of light blue or purple feathers, which he can elevate or depress at pleasure ; a narrow line of black runs along the frontlet, rising on each side higher than the eye, but not passing over it, as Catesby has represented, and as Pennant and many others have described it ; back and upper part of the neck a fine light purple, in which the blue predominates ; a collar of black, proceeding from the hind head, passes with a graceful curve down each side of the neck, to the upper part of the breast, where it forms a crescent ; chin, cheeks, throat, and belly white, the three former slightly tinged with blue ; greater wing-coverts, a rich blue ; exterior sides of the primaries, light blue, those of the secondaries, a deep purple, except the three feathers next to the body, which are of a splendid light blue ; all these, except the primaries, are beautifully barred with crescents of black, and tipped with white ; the interior sides of the wing-feathers are dusky black ; tail long and cuneiform, composed of twelve feathers of a glossy light blue, marked at half inches with transverse curves of black, each feather being tipped with white except the two middle ones, which deepen into a dark purple at the extremities. Breast and sides under the wings a dirty white, faintly stained with purple ; inside of the mouth, the tongue, bill, legs, and claws black ; iris of the eye hazel.

The Blue Jay is an almost universal inhabitant of the woods, frequenting the thickest settlements as well as the deep recesses of the forest, where his squalling voice often alarms the deer to the disappointment and mortification of the hunter,—one of whom informed me that he made it a point, in Summer, to kill every

jay he could meet with. In the charming season of Spring, when every thicket pours forth harmony, the part performed by the Jay always catches the ear. He appears to be among his fellow musicians what the trumpeter is in a band, some of his notes having no distant resemblance to the tones of that instrument. These he has the faculty of changing through a great variety of modulations, according to the particular humor he happens to be in. When disposed for ridicule, there is scarce a bird whose peculiarities of song he cannot tune his notes to. When engaged in the blandishments of love, they resemble the soft chatterings of a duck, and, while he nestles among the thick branches of the cedar, are scarce heard a few paces distance ; but no sooner does he discover your approach, than he sets up a sudden and vehement outcry, flying off, and screaming with all his might, as if he called the whole feathered tribes of the neighbourhood to witness some outrageous usage he had received. When he hops undisturbed among the high branches of the oak and hickory, they become soft and musical ; and his calls of the female a stranger would readily mistake for the repeated creakings of an ungreased wheel-barrow. All these he accompanies with various nods, jerks, and other gesticulations, for which the whole tribe of jays are so remarkable, that, with some other peculiarities, they might have very well justified the great Swedish naturalist in forming them into a separate genus by themselves.

The Blue Jay builds a large nest, frequently in the cedar, sometimes on an apple-tree, lines it with dry fibrous roots, and lays five eggs of a dull olive, spotted with brown. The male is particularly careful of not being heard near the place, making his visits as silently and secretly as possible. His favourite food is chestnuts, acorns, and Indian corn. He occasionally feeds on bugs and caterpillars, and sometimes pays a plundering visit to the orchard, cherry-rows, and potato patch ; and has been known, in times of scarcity, to venture into the barn, through openings between the weather-boards. In these cases he is extremely active and silent, and, if surprised in the fact, makes his escape with precipitation, but without noise, as if conscious of his criminality.

Of all birds he is the most bitter enemy to the owl. No sooner

has he discovered the retreat of one of these, than he summons the whole feathered fraternity to his assistance, who surround the glimmering *solitaire*, and attack him from all sides, raising such a shout as may be heard, in a still day, more than half a mile off. When, in my hunting excursions, I have passed near this scene of tumult, I have imagined to myself that I heard the insulting party venting their respective charges with all the virulency of a Billingsgate mob; the owl, meanwhile, returning every compliment with a broad goggling stare. The war becomes louder and louder, and the owl, at length forced to betake himself to flight, is followed by his whole train of persecutors until driven beyond the boundaries of their jurisdiction.

But the Blue Jay himself is not guiltless of similar depredations with the owl, and becomes in his turn the very tyrant he detested, when he sneaks through the woods, as he frequently does, and among the thickets and hedge-rows, plundering every nest he can find of its eggs, tearing up the callow young by piecemeal, and spreading alarm and sorrow around him. The cries of the distressed parents soon bring together a number of interested spectators (for birds in such circumstances seem truly to sympathise with each other), and he is sometimes attacked with such spirit as to be under the necessity of making a speedy retreat.

He will sometimes assault small birds, with the intention of killing and devouring them; an instance of which I myself once witnessed over a piece of woods near the Schuylkill, where I saw him engaged for more than five minutes pursuing what I took to be a species of *Motacilla*,—wheeling, darting, and doubling in the air, and at last, to my great satisfaction, got disappointed in the escape of his intended prey. In times of great extremity, when his hoard or magazine is frozen up, buried in snow, or perhaps exhausted, he becomes very voracious, and will make a meal of whatever carrion or other animal substance comes in the way; and has been found regaling himself on the bowels of a Robin, in less than five minutes after it was shot.

There are, however, individual exceptions to this general character for plunder and outrage, a proneness for which is probably often occasioned by the wants and irritations of necessity.

A Blue Jay, which I have kept for some time, and with whom I am on terms of familiarity, is in reality a very notable example of mildness of disposition and sociability of manners. An accident in the woods first put me in possession of this bird, while in full plumage, and in high health and spirits ; I carried h'im home with me, and put him into a cage already occupied by a Golden-winged Woodpecker, where he was saluted with such rudeness, and received such a drubbing from the lord of the manor, for entering his premises, that, to save his life, I was obliged to take him out again. I then put him into another cage, where the only tenant was a female Orchard Oriole. She also put on airs of alarm, as if she considered herself endangered and insulted by the intrusion ; the Jay, meanwhile, sat mute and motionless on the bottom of the cage, either dubious of his own situation, or willing to allow time for the fears of his neighbour to subside. Accordingly, in a few minutes, after displaying various threatening gestures (like some of those Indians we read of in their first interviews with the whites,) she began to make her approaches, but with great circumspection, and readiness for retreat. Seeing, however, the Jay begin to pick up some crumbs of broken chestnuts in a humble and peaceable way, she also descended, and began to do the same ; but, at the slightest motion of her new guest, wheeled round, and put herself on the defensive. All this ceremonious jealousy vanished before evening ; and they now roost together, feed, and play together, in perfect harmony and good humor. When the Jay goes to drink, his messmate very impudently jumps into the saucer to wash herself, throwing the water in showers over her companion, who bears it all patiently ; venturing now and then to take a sip between every splash, without betraying the smallest token of irritation. On the contrary, he seems to take pleasure in his little fellow-prisoner, allowing her to pick (which she does very gently) about his whiskers, and to clean his claws from the minute fragments of chestnuts which happen to adhere to them. This attachment on the one part, and mild condescension on the other, may perhaps be partly the effect of mutual misfortunes, which are found not only to knit mankind, but many species of inferior animals, more closely together ; and shews that the dis-

position of the Blue Jay may be humanized and rendered susceptible of affectionate impressions, even for those birds which, in a state of nature, he would have no hesitation in making a meal of.

He is not only bold and vociferous, but possesses a considerable talent for mimicry, and seems to enjoy great satisfaction in mocking and teasing other birds, particularly the little hawk, (*f. Sparverius*,) imitating his cry wherever he sees him, and squealing out as if caught: this soon brings a number of his own tribe around him, who all join in the frolic, darting about the hawk, and feigning the cries of a bird sorely wounded, and already under the clutches of its devourer; while others lie concealed in bushes, ready to second their associates in the attack. But this ludicrous farce often terminates tragically. The hawk, singling one of the most insolent and provoking, sweeps upon him in an unguarded moment, and offers him up a sacrifice to his hunger and resentment. In an instant, the tune is changed; all their buffoonery vanishes, and loud and incessant screams proclaim their disaster.

Whenever the Jay has had the advantage of education from man, he has not only shown himself an apt scholar, but his suavity of manners seems equalled only by his art and contrivances; tho it must be confessed, that his itch for thieving keeps pace with all his other acquirements. Dr. Mease, on the authority of Colonel Postell, of South Carolina, informs me that a Blue Jay, which was brought up in the family of the latter gentleman, had all the tricks and loquacity of a parrot; pilfered everything he could conveniently carry off, and hid them in holes and crevices; answered to his name with great sociability, when called on; could articulate a number of words pretty distinctly; and when he heard any uncommon noise or loud talking, seemed impatient to contribute his share to the general festivity (as he probably thought it) by a display of all the oratorical powers he was possessed of.

Mr. Bartram relates an instance of the Jay's sagacity, worthy of remark. "Having caught a Jay in the winter season," says he, "I turned him loose in the green-house, and fed him with corn, (zea, maize,) the heart of which they are very fond of. This grain being ripe and hard, the bird at first found a difficulty in breaking

it, as it would start from his bill when he struck it. After looking about, and, as if considering for a moment, he picked up his grain, carried and placed it close up in a corner on the shelf, between the wall and a plant box, where, being confined on three sides, he soon effected his purpose, and continued afterwards to make use of this same practical expedient." "The Jay," continues this judicious observer, "is one of the most useful agents in the economy of Nature, for disseminating forest trees, and other ruciferous and hard-seeded vegetables on which they feed. Their chief employment, during the autumnal season, is foraging to supply their winter stores. In performing this necessary duty, they drop abundance of seed in their flight over fields, hedges, and by fences, where they alight to deposit them in the post holes, &c. It is remarkable what numbers of young trees rise up in fields and pastures after a wet winter and spring. These birds alone are capable, in a few years' time, to replant all the cleared lands." \*

The Blue Jays seldom associate in any considerable numbers, except in the months of September and October, when they hover about, in scattered parties of from forty to fifty, visiting the oaks, in search of their favourite acorns. At this season they are less shy than usual, and keep chattering to each other in a variety of strange and querulous notes. I have counted fifty-three, but never more, at one time; and these generally following each other in straggling irregularly from one range of woods to another. Yet we are told by the learned Dr. Latham,—and his statement has been copied into many respectable European publications,—that the Blue Jays of North America "often unite into flocks of twenty thousand at least! which, alighting on a field of ten or twelve acres, soon lay waste the whole." † If this were really so, these birds would justly deserve the character he gives them of being the most destructive species in America. But I will venture the assertion that the tribe *Oriolus Phœniceus*, or red-winged black-birds, in the environs of the river Delaware alone, devour and

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\* Letter of Mr. William Bartram to the Author.

† "Synopsis of Birds," vol. i., p. 337. See also "Encyclopædia Britannica," art. Corvus.



destroy more Indian corn than the whole Blue Jays of America. As to their assembling in such immense multitudes, it may be sufficient to observe that a flock of Blue Jays of twenty thousand would be as extraordinary an appearance in America, as the same number of magpies or cuckoos would be in Britain.

It has been frequently said that numbers of birds are common to the United States and Europe ; at present, however, I am not certain of many. Comparing the best descriptions and delineations of the European ones with those of our native birds said to be of the same species, either the former are very erroneous, or the difference of plumage and habits in the latter justifies us in considering a great proportion of them to be really different species. Be this however as it may, the Blue Jay appears to belong exclusively to North America. I cannot find it mentioned by any writer or traveller among the birds of Guiana, Brazil, or any other part of South America. It is equally unknown in Africa. In Europe, and even in the eastern parts of Asia, it is never seen in its wild state. To ascertain the exact limits of its native regions, would be difficult. These, it is highly probable, will be found to be bounded by the extremities of the temperate zone. Dr. Latham has indeed asserted that the Blue Jay of America is not found farther north than the town of Albany.\* This, however, is a mistake. They are common in the eastern States, and are mentioned by Dr. Belknap in his enumeration of the birds of New Hampshire. † They are also natives of Newfoundland. I myself have seen them in Upper Canada. Blue Jays and Yellow Birds were found by Mr. M<sup>c</sup>Kenzie, when on his journey across the Continent, at the head waters of the Unjigah, or Peace River, in N. lat. 54°, W. lon. 121°, on the west side of the great range of Stony mountains. Steller, who, in 1741, accompanied Captain Behring in his expedition, for the discovery of the northwest coast of America; and who wrote the journal of the voyage, ‡ relates, that he himself went on shore near Cape St. Elias,

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\* "Synopsis," vol. i., p. 357.

† "History of New Hampshire," vol. iii., p. 163.

‡ "Voyages from Montreal," &c., p. 216, 4to. London, 1801.

in lat.  $58^{\circ} 28'$  W. lon.  $141^{\circ} 46'$ , according to his estimation, where he observed several species of birds not known in Siberia: and one, in particular, described by Catesby, under the name of the Blue Jay.\* Mr. William Bartram informs me, that they are numerous in the peninsula of Florida, and that he also found them at Natchez, on the Mississippi. Captain Lewis and Clark, and their intrepid companions, in their memorable expedition across the Continent of North America to the Pacific Ocean, continued to see Blue Jays for six hundred miles up the Missouri.† From these accounts it follows, that this species occupies, generally or partially, an extent of country stretching upwards of seventy degrees from east to west, and more than thirty degrees from north to south; tho, from local circumstances, there may be intermediate tracts, in this immense range, which they seldom visit. [*Vol. I., pp. 11-19.*]

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## ESSAY XII.

### OF THE CAROLINA PARROT.

As so little has hitherto been known of the disposition and manners of this species, the reader will not, I hope, be displeased at my detailing some of these, in the history of a particular favorite, my sole companion in many a lonesome day's march, and of which the figure in the plate is a faithful resemblance.

Anxious to try the effects of education on one of those which I procured at Big Bone Lick, and which was but slightly wounded in the wing, I fixed up a place for it in the stern of my boat, and presented it with some cockle burrs, which it freely fed on in less than an hour after being on board. The intermediate time between eating and sleeping, was occupied in gnawing the sticks that formed its place of confinement, in order to make a practicable breach; which it repeatedly effected. When I abandoned the river

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\* "See "Steller's Journal," *apud Pallas*.

† This fact I had from Captain Lewis.

and travelled by land, I wrapped it up closely in a silk handkerchief, tying it tightly around, and carried it in my pocket. When I stopped for refreshment, I unbound my prisoner, and gave it its allowance, which it generally dispatched with great dexterity, unhusking the seeds from the burr in a twinkling ; in doing which, it always employed its left foot to hold the burr, as did several others that I kept for some time. I began to think that this might be peculiar to the whole tribe, and that they all were, if I may use the expression, left-footed ; but by shooting a number afterwards while engaged in eating mulberries, I found sometimes the left, sometimes the right foot stained with the fruit ; the other always clean ; from which, and the constant practice of those I kept, it appears, that like the human species in the use of their hands, they do not prefer one or the other indiscriminately, but are either left or right-footed. But to return to my prisoner. In recommitting it to "durance vile," we generally had a quarrel ; during which it frequently paid me in kind for the wound I had inflicted, and for depriving it of liberty, by cutting and almost disabling several of my fingers with its sharp and powerful bill. The path through the wilderness between Nashville and Natchez, is, in some places, bad beyond description. There are dangerous creeks to swim, miles of morass to struggle through, rendered almost as gloomy as night, by a prodigious growth of timber, and an underwood of canes and other evergreens ; while the descent into these sluggish streams is often ten or fifteen feet perpendicular into a bed of deep clay. In some of the worst of these places, where I had, as it were, to fight my way through, the Parakeet frequently escaped from my pocket, obliging me to dismount and pursue it through the worst of the morass before I could regain it. On these occasions I was several times tempted to abandon it ; but I persisted in bringing it along. When at night I encamped in the woods, I placed it on the baggage beside me, where it usually sat, with great composure, dozing and gazing at the fire till morning. In this manner I carried it upwards of a thousand miles in my pocket, where it was exposed all day to the jolting of the horse, but regularly liberated at meal times and in the evening, at which it always expressed great satisfaction. In passing through the

Chickasaw and Choctaw nations, the Indians, wherever I stopped to feed, collected around me, men, women, and children, laughing and seeming wonderfully amused with the novelty of my companion. The Chickasaws called it in their language “*Kelinky* ;” but when they heard me call it Poll, they soon repeated the name ; and whenever I chanced to stop among these people, we soon became familiar with each other through the medium of Poll. On arriving at Mr. Dunbar’s, below Natchez, I procured a cage, and placed it under the piazza, where by its call it soon attracted the passing flocks, such is the attachment they have for each other. Numerous parties frequently alighted on the trees immediately above, keeping up a constant conversation with the prisoner. One of these I wounded slightly in the wing, and the pleasure Poll expressed on meeting with this new companion was really amusing. She crept close up to it as it hung on the side of the cage, chattered to it in a low tone of voice, as if sympathizing in its misfortune, scratched about its head and neck with her bill ; and both at night nestled as close as possible to each other, sometimes Poll’s head being thrust among the plumage of the other. On the death of this companion, she appeared restless and inconsolable for several days. On reaching New Orleans, I placed a looking glass beside the place where she usually sat, and the instant she perceived her image, all her former fondness seemed to return, so that she could scarcely absent herself from it a moment. It was evident that she was completely deceived. Always when evening drew on, and often during the day, she laid her head close to that of the image in the glass, and began to doze with great composure and satisfaction. In this short space she had learnt to know her name ; to answer and come when called on ; to climb up my clothes, sit on my shoulder and eat from my mouth. I took her with me to sea, determined to persevere in her education ; but, destined to another fate, poor Poll, having one morning about daybreak wrought her way through the cage, while I was asleep, instantly flew overboard, and perished in the gulf of Mexico. [*Vol. III., pp. 95-7.*]

## ESSAY XIII.

## OF THE GOLD-WINGED WOODPECKER.

. . . In rambling thro the woods one day, I happened to shoot one of these birds, and wounded him slightly on the wing. Finding him in full feather, and seemingly but little hurt, I took him home, and put him into a large cage, made of willows, intending to keep him in my own room, that we might become better acquainted. As soon as he found himself enclosed on all sides, he lost no time in idle fluttering, but throwing himself against the bars of the cage, began instantly to demolish the willows, battering them with great vehemence, and uttering a loud piteous kind of cackling, similar to that of a hen when she is alarmed, and takes to wing. Poor Baron Trenck never laboured with more eager diligence at the walls of his prison, than this son of the forest in his exertions for liberty ; and he exercised his powerful bill with such force, digging into the sticks, seizing and shaking them so from side to side, that he soon opened for himself a passage ; and tho' I repeatedly repaired the breach, and barricadoed every opening, in the best manner I could, yet on my return into the room I always found him at large, climbing up the chairs or running about the floor, where, from the dexterity of his motions, moving backward, forward, and sideways, with the same facility, it became difficult to get hold of him again. Having placed him in a strong wire cage, he seemed to give up all hopes of making his escape, and soon became very tame ; fed on young ears of Indian corn ; refused apples, but ate the berries of the sour gum greedily, small winter grapes, and several other kinds of berries ; exercised himself frequently in climbing, or rather hopping perpendicularly along the sides of the cage ; and, as evening drew on, fixed himself in a high hanging or perpendicular position, and slept with his head in his wing. As soon as dawn appeared, even before it was light enough to perceive him distinctly across the room, he descended to the bottom of the cage, and began his attack on the ears of Indian corn, rapping so loud as to be heard from every room of the house. After this, he would sometimes resume

his former position, and take another nap. He was beginning to become very amusing, and even sociable, when, after a lapse of several weeks, he became drooping, and died, as I conceived, from the effects of his wound. . . .

The abject and degraded character which the Count de Buffon, with equal eloquence and absurdity, has drawn of the whole tribe of Woodpeckers, belongs not to the elegant and sprightly bird now before us. How far it is applicable to any of them will be examined hereafter. He is not 'constrained to drag out an insipid existence in boring the bark and hard fibres of trees to extract his prey,' for he frequently finds in the loose mouldering ruins of an old stump (the capital of a nation of pismires) more than is sufficient for the wants of a whole week. He cannot be said to 'lead a mean and gloomy life, without an intermission of labour,' who usually feasts by the first peep of dawn, and spends the early and sweetest hours of morning on the highest peaks of the tallest trees, calling on his mate or companions; or pursuing and gamboling with them round the larger limbs and body of the tree for hours together; for such are really his habits. Can it be said that 'necessity never grants an interval of sound repose' to that bird, who, while other tribes are exposed to all the peltings of the midnight storm, lodges dry and secure in a snug chamber of his own constructing? or that 'the narrow circumference of a tree circumscribes his dull round of life,' who, as seasons and inclination inspire, roams from the frigid to the torrid zone, feasting on the abundance of various regions? Or is it a proof that 'his appetite is never softened by delicacy of taste,' because he so often varies his bill of fare, occasionally preferring to animal food the rich milkiness of young Indian corn, and the wholesome and nourishing berries of the wild cherry, sour gum, and red cedar? Let the reader turn to the faithful representation of him given in the plate, and say whether his looks be 'sad and melancholy.' It is truly ridiculous and astonishing that such absurdities should escape the lips or pen of one so able to do justice to the respective merits of every species; but Buffon had too often a favourite theory to prop up, that led him insensibly astray; and so forsooth, the whole family of Woodpeckers must look sad, sour, and be



miserable, to satisfy the caprice of a whimsical philosopher, who takes it into his head that they are and ought to be so ! But the Count is not the only European who has misrepresented and trauced this beautiful bird. One has given him brown legs ;\* another a yellow neck ;† a third has declared him a cuckoo ;‡ and, in an English translation of Linnæus's "System of Nature," lately published, he is characterised as follows : "Body, striated with black and gray ; cheeks, red ; chin, black ; never climbs on trees ;"§ which is just as correct as if, in describing the human species, we should say—skin striped with black and green ; cheeks, blue ; chin, orange ; never walks on foot, &c. The pages of Natural History should resemble a faithful mirror in which mankind may recognize the true images of the living originals ; instead of which, we find this department of them too often like the hazy and rough medium of wretched window-glass, thro' whose crooked protuberances everything appears so strangely distorted that one scarcely knows their most intimate neighbours and acquaintances. [*Vol. I., pp. 47-8, 50-1.*]

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#### ESSAY XIV.

##### OF THE IVORY-BILLED WOODPECKER AND THE RED-COAKADED WOODPECKER.

. . . In looking over the accounts given of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker by the naturalists of Europe, I find it asserted, that it inhabits from New Jersey to Mexico. I believe, however, that few of them are ever seen to the north of Virginia, and very few of them even in that State. The first place I observed this bird at, when on my way to the south, was about twelve miles north of Wilmington, in North Carolina. There I found the bird from which the drawing of the figure in the plate was taken. This bird was only

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\* See "Encyc. Brit.," art. Picus. † Latham. ‡ Klein.

§ "P. griseo nigroque transversim striatus"——"truncos arborum non scandit."—*Ind. Ora.* Vol. I., p. 242.

wounded slightly in the wing, and on being caught, uttered a loudly reiterated, and most piteous note, exactly resembling the violent crying of a young child ; which terrified my horse so, as nearly to have cost me my life. It was distressing to hear it. I carried it with me in the chair, under cover, to Wilmington. In passing through the streets its affecting cries surprised every one within hearing, particularly the females, who hurried to the doors and windows with looks of alarm and anxiety. I drove on, and on arriving at the piazza of the hotel, where I intended to put up, the landlord came forward, and a number of other persons who happened to be there, all equally alarmed at what they heard ; this was greatly increased by my asking whether he could furnish me with accommodations for myself and my baby. The man looked blank, and foolish, while the others stared with still greater astonishment. After diverting myself for a minute or two at their expense, I drew my Woodpecker from under the cover, and a general laugh took place. I took him up stairs and locked him up in my room, while I went to see my horse taken care of. In less than an hour I returned, and on opening the door he set up the same distressing shout, which now appeared to proceed from grief that he had been discovered in his attempts at escape. He had mounted along the side of the window, nearly as high as the ceiling, a little below which he had begun to break through. The bed was covered with large pieces of plaster ; the lath was exposed for at least fifteen inches square, and a hole, large enough to admit the fist, opened to the weather-boards ; so that in less than another hour he would certainly have succeeded in making his way through. I now tied a string round his leg, and fastening it to the table, again left him. I wished to preserve his life, and had gone off in search of suitable food for him. As I reascended the stairs, I heard him again hard at work, and on entering had the mortification to perceive that he had almost entirely ruined the mahogany table to which he was fastened, and on which he had wreaked his whole vengeance. While engaged in taking the drawing, he cut me severely in several places, and on the whole, displayed such a noble and unconquerable spirit that I was frequently tempted to restore him to his

native woods. He lived with me nearly three days, but refused all sustenance, and I witnessed his death with regret.

Here, then, is a whole species, I may say, genus, of birds, which Providence seems to have formed for the protection of our fruit and forest trees, from the ravages of vermin; which every day destroy millions of those noxious insects that would otherwise blast the hopes of the husbandman; and which even promote the fertility of the tree; and, in return, are proscribed by those who ought to have been their protector, and incitements and rewards held out for their destruction! Let us examine better into the operation of Nature, and many of our mistaken opinions and groundless prejudices will be abandoned for more just, enlarged, and humane modes of thinking. [*Vol. I., p. 157.*]

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## ESSAY XV.

### OF THE MOTTLED OWL.

On contemplating the grave and antiquated figure of this night-wanderer, so destitute of every thing like gracefulness of shape, I can scarcely refrain from smiling at the conceit, of the ludicrous appearance this bird must have made, had Nature bestowed on it the powers of song, and given it the faculty of warbling out sprightly airs while robed in such a solemn exterior. But the great God of Nature hath, in His wisdom, assigned to this class of birds a more unsocial, and less noble, tho, perhaps, not less useful disposition, by assimilating them, not only in form of countenance, but in voice, manners, and appetite, to some particular beasts of prey; secluding them from the enjoyment of the gay sunshine of day, and giving them little more than the few solitary hours of morning and evening twilight to procure their food and pursue their amours; while all the tuneful tribes, a few excepted, are wrapt in silence and repose. That their true character, however, should not be concealed from those weaker animals on whom they feed (for heaven abhors deceit and hypocrisy), He has stamped

their countenance with strong traits of their murderer, the Cat ; and birds in this respect are, perhaps, better physiognomists than men.

The Owl now before us is chiefly a native of the northern regions, arriving here, with several others, about the commencement of cold weather ; frequenting the uplands and mountainous districts, in preference to the lower parts of the country ; and feeding on mice, small birds, beetles, and crickets. It is rather a scarce species in Pennsylvania ; flies usually in the early part of night and morning ; and is sometimes observed sitting on the fences during day, when it is easily caught ; its vision at that time being very imperfect.

The bird represented in the plate was taken in this situation, and presented to me by a friend. I kept it in the room beside me for some time ; during which its usual position was such as I have given it. Its eyelids were either half shut, or slowly and alternately opening and shutting, as if suffering from the glare of the day ; but no sooner was the sun set, than its whole appearance became lively and animated ; its full and globular eyes shone like those of a cat ; and it often lowered its head, in the manner of a cock when preparing to fight, moving it from side to side, and also vertically, as if reconnoitering you with great sharpness. In flying through the room it shifted from place to place with the silence of a spirit (if I may be allowed the expression), the plumage of its wings being so extremely fine and soft as to occasion little or no friction with the air : a wise provision of Nature, bestowed on the whole genus, to enable them, without giving alarm, to seize their prey in the night. For an hour or two in the evening, and about break of day, it flew about with great activity. When angry, it snapped its bill repeatedly with violence, and so loud as to be heard in the adjoining room, swelling out its eyes to their full dimensions, and lowering its head as before described. It swallowed its food hastily, in large mouthfuls ; and never was observed to drink. Of the eggs and nest of this species I am unable to speak.

The Mottled Owl is ten inches long and twenty-two in extent ; the upper part of the head, the back, ears and lesser wing-coverts, are dark brown, streaked and variegated with black, pale brown,

and ash ; wings lighter, the greater coverts and primaries spotted with white ; tail short, even, and mottled with black, pale brown, and whitish, on a dark brown ground ; its lower side grey ; horns (as they are usually called) very prominent, each composed of ten feathers, increasing in length from the front backwards, and lightest on the inside ; face whitish, marked with small touches of dusky, and bounded on each side with a circling of black ; breast and belly white, beautifully variegated with ragged streaks of black, and small transverse touches of brown ; legs feathered nearly to the claws, with a kind of hairy brown, of a pale brown color ; vent and under tail coverts white, the latter slightly marked with brown ; iris of the eye a brilliant golden yellow ; bill and claws bluish horn color.

This was a female. The male is considerably less in size ; the general colors darker ; and the white on the wing coverts not so observable.

Hollow trees, either in the woods or orchard, or close evergreens in retired situations, are the usual roosting places of this and most of our other species. These retreats, however, are frequently discovered by the Nuthatch, Titmouse, or Blue Jay, who instantly raise the alarm ; a promiscuous group of feathered neighbors soon collect round the spot, like crowds in the streets of a large city when a thief or murderer is detected ; and by their insults and vociferation oblige the recluse to seek for another lodging elsewhere. This may account for the circumstance of sometimes finding them abroad during the day, on fences and other exposed situations. [*Vol. III., pp. 17-19.*]

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## ESSAY XVI.

### OF THE ROBIN.

. . . The Robin is one of our earliest songsters ; even in March, while snow yet dapples the fields, and flocks of them are dispersed about, some few will mount a post or stake of the fence, and make

short and frequent attempts at their song. Early in April, they are only to be seen in pairs, and deliver their notes with great earnestness, from the top of some tree detached from the woods. This song has some resemblance to, and indeed is no bad imitation of, the notes of the Thrush or Thrasher (*turdus rufus*); but, if deficient in point of execution, he possesses more simplicity, and makes up in zeal what he wants in talent; so that the notes of the Robin, in Spring, are universally known, and as universally beloved. They are, as it were, the prelude to the grand general concert that is about to burst upon us from woods, fields, and thickets, whitened with blossoms, and breathing fragrance. By the usual association of ideas, we therefore listen with more pleasure to this cheerful bird, than to many others possessed of far superior powers, and much greater variety. Even his nest is held more sacred among schoolboys than that of some others; and while they will exult in plundering a Jay's or a Cat Bird's, a general sentiment of respect prevails on the discovery of a Robin's. Whether he owes not some little of this veneration to the well known and long established character of his namesake in Britain, by a like association of ideas, I will not pretend to determine. He possesses a good deal of his suavity of manners; and almost always seeks shelter for his young in Summer, and subsistence for himself in the extremes of Winter, near the habitations of man. [*Vol. I., pp. 37-8.*]

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## ESSAY XVII.

### OF THE BLUE BIRD.

. . . As the Blue Bird is so regularly seen in winter, after the continuance of a few days of mild and open weather, it has given rise to various conjectures as to the place of his retreat. Some supposing it to be in close sheltered thickets, lying to the sun; others the neighbourhood of the sea, where the air is supposed to be more temperate, and where the matters thrown up by the waves furnish him with a constant and plentiful supply of food. Others trace



him to the dark recesses of hollow trees, and subterraneous caverns, where they suppose he dozes away the winter, making, like Robinson Crusoe, occasional reconnoitering excursions from his castle, whenever the weather happens to be favourable. But, amidst the snows and severities of winter, I have sought for him in vain in the most favourable sheltered situations of the Middle States, and not only in the neighbourhood of the sea, but on both sides of the mountains.\* I have never, indeed, explored the depths of caverns in search of him, because I would as soon expect to meet with tulips and butterflies there, as Blue Birds; but, among hundreds of woodmen, who have cut down trees of all sorts, and at all seasons, I have never heard one instance of these birds being found so immured in winter; while, in the whole of the Middle and Eastern States, the same general observation seems to prevail that the Blue Bird always makes his appearance in winter after a few days of mild and open weather. On the other hand, I have myself found them numerous in the woods of North and South Carolina, in the depth of winter, and I have also been assured by different gentlemen of respectability, who have resided in the islands of Jamaica, Cuba, and the Bahamas and Bermudas, that this very bird is common there in winter. We also find from the works of Hernandez Piso, and others, that it is well known in Mexico, Guiana, and Brazil; and, if so, the place of its winter retreat is easily ascertained, without having recourse to all the trumpery of holes and caverns, torpidity, hybernation, and such ridiculous improbabilities. [*Vol. I., pp. 62-3.*]

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## ESSAY XVIII.

### OF THE RUBY-CROWNED WREN.

. . . This little bird visits us early in the Spring, from the south, and is generally first found among the maple blossoms, about the beginning of April. These failing, it has recourse to those of the

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\* I speak of the species here generally. Solitary individuals are found, particularly among our cedar trees, sometimes in the very depth of winter.

peach, apple, and other fruit trees, partly for the tops of the sweet and slender stamina of the flowers, and partly for the winged insects that hover among them. In the middle of Summer, I have rarely met with these birds in Pennsylvania; and, as they penetrate as far north as the country round Hudson's Bay, and also breed there, it accounts for their late arrival here, in Fall. They then associate with the different species of titmouse, and the golden crested wren; and are particularly numerous in the month of October, and beginning of November, in orchards, among the decaying leaves of the apple trees, that, at that season, are invested with great numbers of small black-winged insects, among which they make great havoc. I have often regretted the painful necessity one is under of taking away the lives of such inoffensive, useful little creatures, merely to obtain a more perfect knowledge of the species; for they appear so busy, so active and unsuspecting, as to continue searching about the same twig, even after their companions have been shot down beside them. They are more remarkably so in autumn, which may be owing to the great number of young and inexperienced birds which are then among them; and frequently, at this season, I have stood under the tree, motionless, to observe them, while they gleaned among the low branches sometimes within a foot or two of my head. They are extremely adroit in catching their prey; have only at times a feeble chirp; visit the tops of the tallest trees, as well as the lowest bushes; and continue generally for a considerable time among the branches of the same tree, darting about from place to place; appearing, when on the top of a high maple, no bigger than humble-bees.

The Ruby-crowned Wren is four inches long, and six in extent; the upper parts of the head, neck, and back, are of a fine greenish olive, with a considerable tinge of yellow; wings and tail, dusky purplish brown, exteriorly edged with yellow olive; secondaries, and first row of wing-coverts, edged and tipped with white, with a spot of deep purplish brown across the secondaries, just below their coverts; the hind head is ornamented with an oblong lateral spot of vermillion, usually almost hid by the other plumage; round the eye, a ring of yellowish white; whole under parts of the same tint; legs, dark brown; feet and claws, yellow; bill,

slender, straight, not notched, furnished with a few black hairs at the base ; inside of the mouth, orange. The female differs very little in its plumage from the male, the colours being less lively, and the bird somewhat less. Notwithstanding my utmost endeavours, I have never been able to discover the nest ; though, from the circumstance of having found them sometimes here in Summer, I am persuaded that they occasionally breed in Pennsylvania ; but I know several birds, no larger than this, that usually build on the extremities of the tallest trees in the woods ; which I have discovered from their beginning before the leaves are out ; many others, no doubt, choose similar situations ; and, should they delay building until the woods are thickened with leaves, it is no easy matter to discover them. In Fall, they are so extremely fat, as almost to dissolve between the fingers as you open them, owing to the great abundance of their favourite insects at that time. [*Vol. I., pp. 83-4*]

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### ESSAY XIX.

#### OF THE INDIGO BIRD.

. . . Notwithstanding the beauty of his plumage, the vivacity with which he sings, and the ease with which he can be reared and kept, the Indigo Bird is seldom seen domesticated. The few I have met with were taken in trap cages ; and such of any species rarely sing equal to those which have been reared by hand from the nest. There is one singularity which, as it cannot be well represented in the figure, may be mentioned here, viz., that in some certain lights, his plumage appears of a rich sky blue, and in others of a vivid verdegriis green ; so that the same bird, in passing from one place to another before your eyes, seems to undergo a total change of color. When the angle of incidence of the rays of light, reflected from his plumage, is acute, the color is green, when obtuse, blue. Such, I think, I have observed to be uniformly the case, without being optician enough to explain why it is so. From this, however, must be excepted the color of the head, which, being of a very deep blue, is not affected by a change of position. [*Vol. I., pp. 101.*]

## ESSAY XX.

## OF THE CAT BIRD.

. . . This bird, as has been before observed, is very numerous in Summer, in the Middle States. Scarcely a thicket in the country is without its Cat Birds ; and, were they to fly in flocks, like many other birds, they would darken the air with their numbers. But their migrations are seldom observed, owing to their gradual progress and recession, in Spring and Autumn, to and from their breeding-places. They enter Georgia late in February, and reach New England about the beginning of May. In their migrations, they keep pace with the progress of agriculture ; and the first settlers in many parts of the Genesee country, have told me that it was several years, after they had removed there, before the Cat Bird made his appearance among them. With all these amiable qualities to recommend him, few people in the country respect the Cat Bird. On the contrary, it is generally the object of dislike ; and the boys of the United States entertain the same prejudice and contempt for this bird, its nest and young, as those of Britain do for the Yellow-hammer, and its nest, eggs, and young. I am at a loss to account for this cruel prejudice. Even those by whom it is entertained, can scarcely tell you why ; only they “ hate cat birds ;” as some persons tell you they hate Frenchmen, they hate Dutchmen, &c. ; expressions that bespeak their own narrowness of understanding, and want of liberality. Yet, after ruminating over in my own mind all the probable causes, I think I have at last hit on some of them ; the principal of which seems to me to be a certain similarity of taste, and clashing of interest, between the Cat Bird and the farmer. The Cat Bird is fond of large ripe garden strawberries ; so is the farmer, for the good price they bring in market. The Cat Bird loves the best and richest early cherries ; so does the farmer, for they are sometimes the most profitable of his early fruit. The Cat Bird has a particular partiality for the finest ripe mellow pears ; and these are also particular favourites with the farmer. But the Cat Bird has frequently the advantage of the farmer, by snatching off the first-fruits of these delicious

productions ; and the farmer takes revenge, by shooting him down with his gun, as he finds old hats, windmills, and scarecrows, are no impediment in his way to these forbidden fruits ; and nothing but this resource—the *ultimatum* of farmers as well as kings—can restrain his visits. The boys are now set to watch the cherry trees with the gun ; and thus commences a train of prejudices and antipathies, that commonly continue thro' life. Perhaps too, the common note of the Cat Bird, so like the mewing of the animal whose name it bears, and who itself sustains no small share of prejudice, the homeliness of his plumage, and even his familiarity, so proverbially known to beget contempt, may also contribute to this mean, illiberal, and persecuting prejudice ; but, with the generous and the good, the lovers of Nature and of rural charms, the confidence which this familiar bird places in man by building in his garden, under his eye, the music of his song, and the interesting playfulness of his manners, will always be more than a recompense for all the little stolen morsels he snatches. [*Vol. II., pp. 93-4.*]

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## ESSAY XXI.

### OF THE BARN SWALLOW.

There are but few persons in the United States unacquainted with this gay, innocent, and active little bird. Indeed the whole tribe are so distinguished from the rest of small birds by their sweeping rapidity of flight, their peculiar aerial evolutions of wing over our fields and rivers, and through our very streets, from morning to night, that the light of heaven itself, the sky, the trees, or any other common objects of Nature, are not better known than the Swallows. We welcome their first appearance with delight, as the faithful harbingers and companions of flowery Spring and ruddy Summer ; and when, after a long, frost-bound, and boisterous Winter, we hear it announced that “The swallows are come,” what a train of charming ideas are associated with the simple tidings !

The wonderful activity displayed by these birds forms a striking

contrast to the slow habits of most other animals. It may be fairly questioned, whether among the whole feathered tribes which Heaven has formed to adorn this part of creation there be any that, in the same space of time, pass over an equal extent of surface with the Swallow. Let a person take his stand on a fine Summer evening by a new-mown field, meadow, or river shore, for a short time, and among the numerous individuals of this tribe that flit before him, fix his eye on a particular one, and follow, for a while, all its circuitous labyrinths—its extensive sweeps—its sudden, rapidly reiterated zig-zag excursions, little inferior to the lightning itself, and then attempt, by the powers of mathematics, to calculate the length of the various lines it describes. Alas ! even his omnipotent fluxions would avail him little here, and he would soon abandon the task in despair. Yet, that some definite conception may be formed of this extent, let us suppose that this little bird flies in his usual way at the rate of one mile in a minute, which, from the many experiments I have made, I believe to be within the truth ; and that he is so engaged for ten hours every day ; and further, that this active life is extended to ten years (many of our small birds being known to live much longer, even in a state of domestication), the amount of all these, allowing three hundred and sixty-five days to a year, would give us two million one hundred and ninety thousand miles,—upwards of eighty-seven times the circumference of the globe ! Yet this little winged seraph, if I may so speak, who in a few days, and at will, can pass from the borders of the arctic regions to the torrid zone, is forced, when Winter approaches, to descend to the bottoms of lakes, rivers, and mill-ponds, to bury itself in the mud with eels and snapping turtles ; or to creep ingloriously into a cavern, a rat-hole, or a hollow tree, there to doze with snakes, toads, and other reptiles, until the return of Spring ! Is not this true, ye wise men of Europe and America, who have published so many credible narratives on this subject ? The Geese, the Ducks, the Cat-bird, and even the Wren which creeps about our outhouses in Summer like a mouse, are all acknowledged to be migratory, and to pass to southern regions at the approach of Winter : the Swallow alone, on whom Heaven has conferred superior powers of wing, must



sink in torpidity at the bottom of our rivers, or doze all Winter in the caverns of the earth. I am myself something of a traveller, and foreign countries afford many novel sights: should I assert that in some of my peregrinations I had met with a nation of Indians, all of whom, old and young, at the commencement of cold weather descend to the bottom of their lakes and rivers, and there remain until the breaking-up of frost; nay, should I affirm that thousands of people in the neighbourhood of this city regularly undergo the same semi-annual submersion,—that I myself had fished up a whole family of these from the bottom of Schuylkill, where they had lain torpid all Winter, carried them home, and brought them all comfortably to themselves again,—should I even publish this in the learned pages of the Transactions of our Philosophical Society, who would believe me? Is then, the organisation of a Swallow less delicate than that of a man? Can a bird, whose vital functions are destroyed by a short privation of pure air and its usual food, sustain, for six months, a situation where the most robust man would perish in a few hours, or minutes? Away with such absurdities! They are unworthy of a serious refutation. I should be pleased to meet with a man who has been personally more conversant with birds than myself, who has followed them in their wide and devious routes—studied their various manners—mingled with and marked their peculiarities more than I have done; yet the miracle of a resuscitated swallow, in the depth of Winter, from the bottom of a mill-pond, is, I confess, a phenomenon in ornithology that I have never met with.

What better evidence have we that these fleet-winged tribes, instead of following the natural and acknowledged migrations of many other birds, lie torpid all Winter in hollow trees, caves, and other subterraneous recesses? That the Chimney Swallow, in the early part of Summer, may have been found in a hollow tree, and in great numbers too, is not denied; such being, in some places of the country (as has been shewn in the history of that species), their actual places of rendezvous, on their first arrival, and their common roosting-place long after; or that the Bank Swallows, also, soon after their arrival, in the early part of Spring, may be chilled by the cold mornings which we frequently experience at

that season, and be found in this state in their holes, I would as little dispute ; but that either the one or the other has ever been found, in the midst of Winter in a state of torpidity, I do not, cannot believe. Millions of trees, of all dimensions, are cut down every Fall and Winter in this country, where, in their proper season, swallows swarm around us. Is it therefore in the least probable that we should, only once or twice in an age, have no other evidence than one or two solitary and very suspicious reports of a Mr. Somebody having made a discovery of this kind? If caves were their places of Winter retreat, perhaps no country on earth could supply them with a greater choice. I have myself explored many of these, in various parts of the United States, both in Winter and in Spring, particularly in that singular tract of country in Kentucky, called the Barrens, where some of these subterraneous caverns are several miles in length, lofty and capacious, and pass under a large and deep river—have conversed with the saltpetre workers by whom they are tenanted ; but never heard or met with one instance of a swallow having been found there in winter. These people treated such reports with ridicule.

It is to be regretted that a greater number of experiments have not been made, by keeping live swallows through the Winter, to convince these believers in the torpidity of birds, of their mistake. That class of cold-blooded animals which are known to become torpid during Winter, and of which hundreds and thousands are found every season, are subject to the same when kept in a suitable room for experiment. How is it with the Swallows in this respect? Much powerful testimony might be produced on this point. The following experiments recently made by Mr. James Pearson of London, and communicated by Sir John Trevelyan, Bart., to Mr. Bewick, the celebrated engraver in wood, will be sufficient for our present purpose, and throw great light on this part of the subject :—\*

“Five or six of these birds were taken about the latter end of August, 1784, in a bat fowling-net at night. They were put separately into small cages, and fed with nightingale’s food. In

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\* See Bewick’s “British Birds,” Vol. I., p. 254.

about a week or ten days, they took food of themselves. They were then put all together into a deep cage, four feet long, with gravel at the bottom ; a broad shallow pan with water was placed in it, in which they sometimes washed themselves, and seemed much strengthened by it. One day, Mr. Pearson observed that they went into the water with unusual eagerness, hurrying in and out again repeatedly with such swiftness as if they had been suddenly seized with a frenzy. Being anxious to see the result, he left them to themselves about half-an-hour, and, going to the cage again, found them all huddled together in a corner apparently dead. The cage was then placed at a proper distance from the fire, when only two of them recovered, and were as healthy as before,—the rest died. The two remaining ones were allowed to wash themselves occasionally for a short time only ; but their feet soon after became swelled and inflamed, which Mr. Pearson attributed to their perching, and they died about Christmas. Thus, the first year's experiment was in some measure lost. Not discouraged by the failure of this, Mr. Pearson determined to make a second trial the succeeding year, from a strong desire of being convinced of the truth of their going into a state of torpidity. Accordingly, the next season, having taken some more birds, he put them into the cage, and in every respect pursued the same methods as with the last ; but, to guard their feet from the bad effects of the damp and cold, he covered the perches with flannel, and had the pleasure to observe that the birds thrived extremely well ; they sung their song during the Winter, and, soon after Christmas, began to moult, which they got through without any difficulty, and lived three or four years, regularly moulting every year at the usual time. On the renewal of their feathers, it appeared that their tails were forked exactly the same as in those birds which return hither in the Spring, and in every respect their appearance was the same. These birds, says Mr. Pearson, were exhibited to the Society for promoting Natural History, on the 14th day of February, 1786, at the time they were in a deep moult, during a severe frost, when the snow was on the ground. Minutes of this circumstances were entered in the books of the society. These birds died at last from neglect, during a long illness which Mr. Pearson had ; they died

in the Summer. Mr. Pearson concludes his very interesting account in these words :—20th January, 1797.—I have now in my house, No. 21 Great Newport Street, Long Acre, four swallows in moult, in as perfect health as any birds ever appeared to be when moulting.”

The Barn Swallow of the United States has hitherto been considered by many writers as the same with the common Chimney Swallow of Europe. They differ, however, in color, as well as in habits ; the European species having the belly and vent white, the American species those parts of a bright chestnut ; the former building in the corners of chimneys, near the top, the latter never in such places ; but usually in barns, sheds, and other outhouses, on beams, braces, rafters, &c. It is difficult to reconcile these constant differences of manners and markings in one and the same bird ; I shall therefore take the liberty of considering the present as a separate and distinct species.

The Barn Swallow arrives in this part of Pennsylvania from the south on the last week in March, or the first week in April, and passes on to the north as far, at least, as the river St. Lawrence. On the east side of the great range of the Alleghany, they are dispersed very generally over the country, wherever there are habitations, even to the summit of high mountains ; but, on account of the greater coldness of such situations, are usually a week or two later in making their appearance there. On the 16th of May, being on a shooting expedition on the top of Pocano mountain, Northampton, when the ice on that and on several successive mornings was more than a quarter of an inch thick, I observed, with surprise, a pair of these Swallows which had taken up their abode on a miserable cabin there. It was then about sunrise, the ground white with hoar frost, and the male was twittering on the roof by the side of his mate with great sprightliness. The man of the house told me that a single pair came there every season, and built their nest on a projecting beam under the eaves, about six or seven feet from the ground. At the bottom of the mountain, in a large barn belonging to the tavern there, I counted upwards of twenty nests, all seemingly occupied. In the woods they are never met with ; but, as you approach a farm, they soon

catch the eye, cutting their gambols in the air. Scarcely a barn, to which these birds can find access, is without them; and, as public feeling is universally in their favour, they are seldom or never disturbed. The proprietor of the barn last mentioned, a German, assured me, that if a man permitted the Swallows to be shot, his cows would give bloody milk, and also that no barn where Swallows frequented would ever be struck with lightning; and I nodded assent. When the tenets of superstition "lean to the side of humanity," one can readily respect them. On the west side of the Alleghany these birds become more rare. In travelling through the States of Kentucky and Tennessee, from Lexington to the Tennessee river, in the months of April and May, I did not see a single individual of this species; though the Purple Martin, and, in some places, the Bank Swallow, were numerous.

Early in May they begin to build. From the size and structure of the nest, it is nearly a week before it is completely finished. One of these nests, taken on the 21st of June from the rafter to which it was closely attached, is now lying before me. It is in the form of an inverted cone, with a perpendicular section cut off on that side by which it adhered into the wood. At the top it has an extension of the edge, or offset, for the male or female to sit on occasionally, as appeared by the dung; the upper diameter was about six inches by five, the height externally seven inches. This shell is formed of mud, mixed with fine hay, as plaisterers do their mortar with hair, to make it adhere the better; the mud seems to have been placed in regular strata, or layers, from side to side; the hollow of this cone (the shell of which is about an inch in thickness) is filled with fine hay, well stuffed in; above that is laid a handful of very large downy geese feathers; the eggs are five, white, specked, and spotted all over with reddish brown. Owing to the semi-transparency of the shell, the eggs have a slight tinge of flesh color. The whole weighs about two pounds.

They have generally two brood in the season. The first make their appearance about the second week of June; and the last brood leave the nest about the 10th of August. Though it is not uncommon for twenty, and even thirty, pair to build in the same barn, yet every thing seems to be conducted with great order and

affection ; all seems harmony among them, as if the interest of each were that of all. Several nests are often within a few inches of each other ; yet no appearance of discord or quarrelling takes place in this peaceful and affectionate community.

When the young are fit to leave the nest, the old ones entice them out by fluttering backwards and forwards, twittering and calling to them every time they pass ; and the young exercise themselves, for several days, in short essays of this kind, within doors, before they first venture abroad. As soon as they leave the barn, they are conducted by their parents to the trees, or bushes, by the pond, creek, or river shore, or other suitable situation, where their proper food is most abundant, and where they can be fed with the greatest convenience to both parties. Now and then they take a short excursion themselves, and are also frequently fed while on wing by an almost instantaneous motion of both parties, rising perpendicularly in air, and meeting each other. About the middle of August they seem to begin to prepare for their departure. They assemble on the roof in great numbers, dressing and arranging their plumage, and making occasional essays, twittering with great cheerfulness. Their song is a kind of sprightly warble, sometimes continued for a considerable time. From this period to the 8th of September, they are seen near the Schuylkill and Delaware, every afternoon for two or three hours before sunset, passing along to the south in great numbers, feeding as they skim along. I have counted several hundreds pass within sight in less than a quarter of an hour, all directing their course towards the south. The reeds are now their regular roosting-places ; and, about the middle of September, there is scarcely an individual of them to be seen. How far south they continue their route is uncertain ; none of them remain in the United States. Mr. Bartram informs me that, during his residence in Florida, he often saw vast flocks of this and our other Swallows, passing from the peninsula towards the south in September and October ; and also on their return to the north about the middle of March. It is highly probable that, were the countries to the south of the Gulf of Mexico, and as far south as the great river Maranon, visited and explored by a competent Naturalist, these regions would be found



to be the winter rendezvous of the very birds now before us, and most of our other migratory tribes.

In a small volume which I have lately met with, entitled, "An Account of the British Settlement of Honduras," by Captain George Henderson, of the 5th West India regiment, published in London in 1809, the writer, in treating of that part of its natural history which relates to birds, gives the following particulars :— "Myriads of swallows," says he, "are also the occasional inhabitants of Honduras. The time of their residence is generally confined to the period of the rains, [that is from October to February] after which, they totally disappear. There is something remarkably curious and deserving of notice in the ascent of these birds. As soon as the dawn appears they quit their place of rest, which is usually chosen amid the rushes of some watery savanna ; and invariably rise to a certain height, in a compact spiral form, and which at a distance often occasions them to be taken for an immense column of smoke. This attained, they are then seen separately to disperse in search of food, the occupation of their day. To those who may have had the opportunity of observing the phenomenon of a water-spout, the similarity of evolution, in the ascent of these birds, will be thought surprisingly striking. The descent, which regularly takes place at sunset, is conducted much in the same way, but with inconceivable rapidity. And the noise which accompanies this can only be compared to the falling of an immense torrent, or the rushing of a violent gust of wind. Indeed, to an observer, it seems wonderful that thousands of these birds are not destroyed, in being thus propelled to the earth with such irresistible force."\*

How devoutly it is to be wished that the natural history of those regions were more precisely known. So absolutely necessary as it is to the perfect understanding of this department of our own !

The Barn Swallow is seven inches long, and thirteen inches in extent ; bill, black ; upper part of the head, neck, rump, and tail-coverts, steel-blue, which descends rounding on the breast ; front and chin, deep chestnut ; belly, vent, and lining of the wing, light

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\* Henderson's *Honduras*, p. 119.

chestnut ; wings and tail, brown black, slightly glossed with reflections of green ; tail, greatly forked, the exterior feather on each side an inch and a-half longer than the next, and tapering towards the extremity, each feather, except the two middle ones, marked on its inner vane with an oblong spot of white ; lores, black, ; eye, dark hazel ; sides of the mouth, yellow ; legs, dark purple.

The female differs from the male in having the belly and vent rufous white, instead of light chestnut ; these parts are also slightly clouded with rufous ; and the exterior tail-feathers are shorter.

These birds are easily tamed, and soon become exceedingly gentle and familiar. I have frequently kept them in my room for several days at a time, where they employed themselves in catching flies, picking them from my clothes, hair, &c., calling out occasionally as they observed some of their old companions passing the windows. [*Vol. V., pp. 34-43.*]



# IV.—The Solitary Philosopher.

*Addressed to the Editor of the "BEE," March 17, 1791.*

N O T E.

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Of "The Solitary Philosopher," see more in our Memorial-Introduction.—*G.*



## The Solitary Philosopher.

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SIR,—Among all the variety of interesting pieces with which you weekly entertain your readers, none please me more than those anecdotes that relate to originality of character in particular individuals; and I am somewhat surprised that your philosophical correspondents have not favoured us with more frequent accounts of these uncommon personages than they have done. You have yourself acknowledged that one great design of your work is to bring to light men of genius, or, in other words, persons who might otherwise have languished in obscurity, whose superior talents and studious researches enable them to be important members of society, and highly beneficial to their fellow creatures. But in what manner shall those proceed, who, though possessing much real genius and valuable knowledge, are either unwilling, or, being destitute of literary abilities, are unable to present themselves or their discoveries to the world through your paper. They must still remain in obscurity if no assisting hand interferes; and except for the remembrance of a few friends, the world may never know that such persons ever existed. Give me leave, therefore, for once, to act the part of introducer, and present you with a short account of an original still in life.

On the side of a large mountain, about ten miles west from this place, in a little hut of his own rearing, which has known no other possessor these fifty years, lives this strange and very singular person. Though his general usefulness and communicative disposition requires him often to associate with the surrounding



rustics, yet, having never had an inclination to travel farther than to the neighbouring village, and being totally unacquainted with the world, his manners, conversation, and dress, are strikingly noticeable. A little plot of ground that extends round his cottage is the narrow sphere to which he confines himself; and in this wild retreat he appears to a stranger as one of the early inhabitants of the earth, ere polished by frequent intercourse, or united in society. In his youth, being deprived of the means of education, and till this hour a stranger to reading, the most valuable treasures of time are utterly unknown to him, so that what knowledge he has acquired seems to be from the joint exertions of vigorous powers and an unwearied course of experiments.

It is impossible, in the limited bounds of this paper, to give the particulars of all the variety of professions in which he engages, and in which he is allowed by the whole inhabitants around him to excel. His genius seems universal; and he is at once by nature, botanist, philosopher, naturalist and physician.

The place where he resides seems indeed peculiarly calculated for assisting him in these favourite pursuits. Within a stone's throw of his hut, a deep enormous chasm extends itself up the mountain for more than four miles, through the bottom of which a large body of water rages in loud and successive falls through the fractured channel, while its stupendous sides, studded with rocks, are overhung with bushes and trees, that meeting from opposite sides, and mixing their branches, entirely conceal, at times, the river from view; so that when a spectator stands above he sees nothing but a luxuriance of green branches and tops of trees, and hears at a dreadful distance below the brawling of the river. In this vale, or glen, innumerable rare and valuable herbs are discovered; and in the harvest months this is his continual resort. He explores it with most unwearied attention, climbs every cliff, even the most threatening, and from the perplexing profusion of plants, collects those herbs of whose qualities and value he is well acquainted. For this purpose he has a large basket with a variety of divisions, in which he deposits every particular species by itself. With this he is often seen labouring home to his hut, where they are suspended in large and numerous parcels from

the roof, while the sage himself sits smiling amidst his simple stores.

In cultivating his little plot of ground, he proceeds likewise by methods entirely new to his neighbours. He has examined, by numberless strange experiments, the nature of the soil, watches every progressive advance of the grain, and so well is he provided for its defence against vermin, that they are no sooner seen than destroyed. By these means he has greatly enriched the soil, which was by nature barren and ungenerous, while his crop nearly doubles that of his neighbours, the more superstitious of whom, from his lonely life, and success in these affairs, scruple not to believe him in league with the devil.

As a mechanic, he is confined to no particular branch. He lives by himself, and seems inclined to be dependent on none. He is his own shoemaker, cutler, and tailor; builds his own barns, and raises his own fences; threshes his own corn, and, with very little assistance, cuts it down. From his infancy he has enjoyed an uninterrupted flow of health, but there is scarce a neighbouring peasant around us who has not, when wounded by accident, or confined by sickness, experienced the salutary effects of his skill.

In these cases his presence of mind is surprising, his applications simple, his medicines within the reach of any cottager, and in effecting a cure, he is seldom unsuccessful. Nor is his assistance in physic and surgery confined to the human species alone. Domestic and useful animals of every kind profit by his researches. He has been known frequently to cure horses, cows, sheep, &c., by infusing certain herbs among warm water, and giving them to drink. In short, so fully persuaded are the rustics of his knowledge, in the causes and cure of disorders, to which their cattle are subject, that in every critical or alarming case he is immediately consulted and his prescriptions observed with the most precise exactness. I should arrogate too much to my own praise to say that I was the first who took any particular notice of this *solitaire*. He is known to many ingenious gentlemen in that place of the country, and has been often the subject of their conversation and wonder. Nor has the honourable gentleman whose tenant he is, suffered this rustic original to pass unnoticed or

unbefriended; but with his usual generosity, and a love to mankind, that dignifies all his actions, has from time to time transmitted to him parcels of new and useful plants, roots, seeds, &c., while the other shows himself worthy of such bounty, by a yearly specimen of their products, and a relation of the manner in which he treated them.

About six months ago I went to pay him a visit, along with an intimate friend, no less remarkable for a natural curiosity.—On arriving at his little hut, we found, to our no small disappointment, that he was from home. As my friend, however, had never been in that part of the country before, I conducted him to the glen, to take a view of some of the beautifully romantic scenes and wild prospects that this place affords. We had not proceeded far along the bottom of the vale, when, hearing a rustling among the branches above our heads, I discovered our hoary botanist, with his basket, passing along the brow of a rock, that hung almost over the centre of the stream. Having pointed him out to my companion, we were at a loss for some time how to bring about a conversation with him; having however, a flute in my pocket, of which music he is exceedingly fond, I began a few airs, which by the sweetness of the echoes, was heightened into the most enchanting melody. In a few minutes this had its desired effect; and our little old man stood beside us, with his basket in his hand. On stopping at his approach, he desired us to proceed, complimented us on the sweetness of our music, expressed the surprise he was in on hearing it; and leaning his basket on an old trunk, listened with all the enthusiasm of rapture. He then, at our request, presented us with a sight of the herbs he had been collecting, entertained us with a narrative of the discoveries he had made in his frequent searches through the vale, “which,” said he, “contains treasures that few know the value of.”

Seeing us pleased with this discourse, he launched forth into a more particular account of the vegetables, reptiles, wild beasts, and insects that frequented the place, and with much judgment explained their various properties. “Were it not” says he, “for the innumerable millions of insects, that in the summer months swarm in the air, I believe dead carcasses and other putrid sub-

stances might have dreadful effects ; but no sooner does a carcass begin to grow putrid, than these insects, led by the smell, flock to the place, and there deposit their eggs, which in a few days produce such a number of maggots, that the carcase is soon consumed. While they are thus employed below, the parent flies are no less busy in devouring the noxious vapours that incessantly ascend, thus the air by these insects is kept sweet and pure, till the storms of winter render their existence unnecessary, and at once destroy them. And Heaven that has formed nothing in vain, exhibits these things for our contemplation, that we may adore that all bounteous Creator, who makes even the most minute and seemingly destructive creatures subservient to the good of man."

In such a manner did this poor and illiterate peasant moralize on the common occurrences of nature ; these glorious and invaluable truths did he deduce from vile reptiles, the unheeded insect, and simple herb, that lies neglected or is trodden under foot as useless and offensive ; and what friend to mankind does not, on contemplating this hoary rustic's story, fondly wish, with its writer, that learning had lent its aid to polish a genius that might have one day surprised the world with the glorious blaze of a Locke or a Newton.

I have nothing, Sir, to offer as an apology for the length of this paper, but the entertainment I hoped it might afford your numerous readers, and its truth, which is not unknown to a number of your respectable subscribers in this quarter, some of whom may perhaps favour you with more particulars respecting his discoveries than can at present be given by

A. W———N.

Paisley, February 16, 1791.



**V.—Oration on the Power and Value  
of National Liberty.**

DELIVERED TO A LARGE ASSEMBLY OF CITIZENS, AT MILESTOWN,  
PENNSYLVANIA, ON WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4TH, 1801, THE DAY ON  
WHICH MR. JEFFERSON WAS ELECTED PRESIDENT.



NOTE.

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This Speech, like the song, "Jefferson and Liberty," was extremely popular, and is found in all the important (American) contemporary newspapers and periodicals. Of its Author's intercourse with Jefferson, see our Memorial-Introduction and the "Letters."—G.



## Oration.

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Disguise thyself as thou wilt, still, Slavery, still thou art a bitter draught ; and though thousands in all ages have been made to drink of thee, thou art no less bitter on that account.

STERNE.

GENTLEMEN,—The subject to which I mean to call your attention on this distinguished occasion, is the POWER AND VALUE OF NATIONAL LIBERTY ; a subject of all other earthly concerns the most interesting to men ; but particularly so to freemen. It is indeed with the deepest consciousness of my utter inability to do justice to so noble a theme, that I venture to address you on this auspicious day ; but trusting with all my deficiencies, to the indulgence of this numerous and respectable assembly, many of whom I know have hazarded their lives in defence of liberty, and all of whom I trust glory in this inestimable inheritance, I solicit for myself your kind and patient attention.

There is not, perhaps, in the whole English language, a more expressive term than the word liberty. The very sound seems to inspire with ardour, and to rouse the heart to energy. Among the ancient Romans it was a sacred and soul-inspiring name, that animated their legions to battle, and resounded in times of peace, through that immense Republic, in songs of triumph. During your late arduous, but triumphant struggle for independence, in this western world, with a powerful and inveterate antagonist ; a kingdom of soldiers and seamen, provided with every necessary, and every implement of destruction in abundance, against an infant colony of farmers and woodsmen, without fleets, without armies, unpractised in the bloody arts of war and dispersed over

an immense country ; it was this inspiring name, liberty, that collected from every direction your gallant youths, that created arms, heroes, and armies, that bore you on through every danger and every difficulty, to victory and glory, and drove your enemies before you back to the ocean, as the gloomy clouds of the east roll back before the irresistible fury of the roaring north-west. It was this illustrious name, and your glorious example, that roused, as if by electricity, a great, but deeply oppressed nation, of twenty-five millions of people, to burst the chains and rivetted shackles of despotism as in a moment, and to hurl back the accumulated vengeance of ages of sufferings on the heads of their overwhelmed oppressors. It was this that demolished the gloomy dungeons of the Bastile—that dethroned and devoted to punishment, a once powerful monarch, and has rendered the French nation not only invincible, but victorious over the whole combined arms of Europe.

How astonishing that one word should produce such extraordinary effects ; and more astonishing still, if, as some persons assert, this thing liberty be nothing more than a name—an ideal notion, that exists but in imagination. Amazing, indeed, that a mere name—an ideal notion—should inspire millions of men to scorn every danger, to face death in its most terrible forms, and glory, with their expiring breath, in their cause ! No, gentlemen, the heroes of America, thank Heaven ! have demonstrated to the world that liberty is something more than a name—something more than a notion ;—that it is a blessed and substantial reality, the great strength and happiness of nations, and the universal and best friend of man.

In order to give you a concise and comprehensive definition of true liberty, it will be necessary for me, in the first place, to observe, that there have been people in the world weak or wicked enough to believe that liberty was the right and privilege of doing just whatever they pleased. This, so far from being liberty, is the most complete tyranny, and would if adopted, introduce universal anarchy, and the total subversion of all society. The strong would overpower the weak ; they, in their turn, would prey upon and devour one another ; all right, justice, and civil-

ization, would be completely swept away, and nothing left of man but an unprincipled herd of ferocious savages. This, therefore, cannot be true liberty, even according to these gentlemen's own opinions; for it would then be no imaginary notion, no airy dream, but a most dreadful reality indeed.

There have been others who have imagined liberty to consist in an equality of property, and have looked upon those who were richer, or had greater possessions than themselves, as exceptions to, and violators of this their favourite system of liberty. Such an opinion as this can only arise from ignorance or want of reflection on the nature of man. A moment's consideration might, methinks, make its absurdity and even impossibility evident to every one. Suppose, for the sake of argument, that such an equal and universal distribution of property was made, how long would it continue so? Not a day! no, perhaps, not an hour! Some would be more indolent, some more extravagant, others more industrious, careful, or enterprising, than the rest, and the property of these would increase or diminish accordingly. If indeed, all men were equally strong, equally industrious, frugal, and ingenious, such a state of things might perhaps be possible; but as mankind now are, of such various inclinations, powers, and dispositions, disproportion of property is only a necessary consequence of this disproportion of abilities, and has been and will continue to be so till the end of time. No! gentlemen, true liberty consists, not in depriving any person of the advantages of superior talents and acquirements, or in robbing the industrious to support the idle and extravagant; but in securing to every man the fruits of his own honest diligence, or those which have descended to him from his forefathers. True genuine national liberty may, in a few words, be defined thus:—the full and unrestrained freedom of speaking and acting to promote our own happiness, in so far as we do not encroach on the like rights of another—the secure protection of person and property under good and equitable laws—the strict and impartial distribution of justice to all ranks and descriptions of persons—and the free exercise of opinion and religious worship. These constitute true liberty—these are the fountains from whence every blessing flows

that renders human life desirable. Nor are they the gifts of man but the birth-right of every human being, bestowed on him by his great Creator. Possessed of these, arts, science, agriculture, commerce, virtue, religion, and the whole resources of a nation flourish. Deprived of them the most gloomy ignorance, vice, barbarity, oppression, and bigotry, descend, in dismal darkness, and spread ruin and desolation over a wretched country.

To confirm and illustrate these truths, and to show liberty in all its native loveliness, we need only contrast it with the hideous picture of slavery, which the history of almost every region of this restless globe has exhibited to our melancholy contemplation.

The first and most ancient account we have of national slavery is recorded in the book of Exodus, where we are told that the children of Israel were made to serve, with rigour, as slaves to the Egyptians—that they were loaded beyond their strength—that their lives were made bitter with hard bondage, in mortar and in brick, and that in order to prevent them from multiplying, and thereby becoming formidable to their oppressors, their male infants were most inhumanly ordered to be murdered as soon as born. It is added, that they cried because of their affliction, and their cries came up before God, (as the cries of the oppressed always will), who rescued them from slavery and overthrew their oppressors. In this account, there are two things particularly worthy of notice : how weak and contemptible were these Israelites while under the lash of tyranny ! but no sooner were they encircled with freedom than they assumed a most formidable appearance, and not only became invulnerable to their enemies, but conquered almost wherever they went. Again, by attentively considering the history of this wonderful people, it would appear that the Supreme Being Himself considered national slavery as the deepest state of human wretchedness, by making it His usual and most awful punishment for their great national offences. Accordingly, we read that their whole country was ravaged by the Babylonians—their king carried in chains to Babylon, and themselves sold for bondmen and bondwomen, and whoever will take the trouble of reading the 5th chapter of the Lamentations of Jeremiah, or the 18th of Deuteronomy, from the 29th verse to the end, will there

find such a detail of the miseries of slavery, as cannot fail of affecting every generous heart with horror and indignation.

Since that period what innumerable scenes of more aggravated cruelty have succeeded! What long and bloody tragedies of real woe have been acted upon the vast theatre of this world! What immense portions of this habitable globe have been laid waste, depopulated, and covered with ruins! What multitudes of the human race have been murdered, with every circumstance of cruelty, to satiate the ambition, revenge, or madness of tyranny! Even at this moment how many of our fellow-creatures in different quarters of the world, as virtuous, as brave, as deserving as we are, lie groaning in hopeless wretchedness, under the trampling feet of this monster, denied even the poor comfort of complaining. Yes, citizens, millions of your fellow beings are at this moment in actual want of bread—surrounded by all the horrors of famine, not the effect of unproductive seasons or bad crops, but the consequence of a long, bloody, and unjust war, begun and persisted in contrary to the will, and in spite of the wishes, tears, and prayers of the people.

Need I enlarge further on this gloomy side of the subject to raise in your souls an abhorrence of tyranny? Need I add to this black catalogue the bloody persecutions, burnings, banishments, and imprisonments for religion, that have disgraced every country in Europe, where men were compelled to act contrary to their conscience or suffer death? Where the flames were kindled; the images of saints presented, and the poor sufferer left to his choice, to worship the one, or be thrown into the other. Where gloomy inquisitions were erected, and wheels, racks, and other instruments of torture, set to work in their dismal dungeons, the bare recital of whose scenes would be sufficient to freeze the blood with horror.

Let no man say that the dangers of a repetition of these things are past. The spirit and principles that led to these atrocities remain to this day, interwoven with, and incorporated into almost all the old governments of Europe, and will, if not thoroughly reformed, burst out into such, and perhaps much more outrageous persecutions, unless the righteous Judge and Great Ruler of the



universe has already sealed their universal downfall and total destruction.

From these dreary and distressing scenes, let us now turn to that glorious deliverer, that illustrious benefactress of mankind, before whose august presence tyrants expire, and all those horrors vanish like the shades of night before the splendour of the rising sun. In this western woody world, far from the contaminating influence of the European politics, has the great temple of Liberty been erected. Under no government on earth is so large, so equal a proportion of civil and religious freedom enjoyed by every individual citizen. What are the governments of the old world but huge devouring monsters, gorging their ferocious maws with the hard-earned morsels of the oppressed multitude, drinking up their tears, and sporting with their bloody sufferings? Read their histories—visit their countries—converse with their most intelligent inhabitants—and the more you see, and hear, and experience, the more you will love and venerate this great, this stupendous, and, as I trust, everlasting monument of the power and value of liberty, which you and your fathers have erected for the refuge, the happiness, and inheritance of unborn millions. Indeed, gentlemen, I cannot more strikingly illustrate the power, and demonstrate the value of liberty, than by giving you the outlines of this immense structure, and contrasting it with the fairest and most boasted system of governments that kings and their sycophants can produce.

Here the great body of the people, of which this respectable audience form a part, are the fountain of all power, and their will the foundation on which the whole superstructure of government is erected. By your voice it was called into existence, for your benefit it is altered and improved, by your energy and talents it is supported and directed. You make, or you unmake laws—you declare war, or you proclaim peace. Not, indeed, in your own individual persons, but in the persons of your real representatives. From the wisest and most faithful of your fellow-citizens, you select men to perform the great duties of government. Their turn of duty over, if they have shown themselves worthy of your confidence, they are re-appointed; if not, they descend again into

the rank of a private citizen. In the exercise of this right, by the people themselves, lies the chief excellence of a republican form of government; as it not only makes the representatives responsible to, and dependent on the people, as they ought to be, but provides an effectual remedy for almost every abuse, by enabling the people to remove from the great councils of the nation, those men whose measures and designs may be deemed hostile to their liberties. How different this from those wretched countries of Europe, where the voice of the people is totally disregarded, or treated with the utmost contempt! Where two or three men of property appoint a nominal representative for thousands, and where hundreds of thousands have no representative at all. Where those who fight their battles, cultivate their fields, and crown their tables with every luxury, are looked down on as beings of an inferior species, and branded with the opprobrious epithet of the swinish multitude; where their haughty rulers are born kings, bishops, and legislators, though nature, perhaps, has made them fools; and where these important and awful offices, on the proper management of which the lives and welfare of so many millions depend, descend as an inheritance, from father to son, however weak, wicked, or unprincipled.

Universal liberty of conscience, in matters of religion, is here established on the most liberal ground. Every citizen who believes in one Supreme Being, is eligible, with the exceptions of some slight considerations of age and residence, to the highest places of trust and honour, and may worship God as may seem most agreeable to his conscience. Compare this with the churches of Europe, as established by law—with the despotism of the Romish church in Spain, Italy, and Portugal, to whose creed every officer of government must conform, or affect to conform, and where the people are compelled to support, at an enormous expence, a multitude of priests, monks, friars, &c., who swarm, like the devouring locusts, over the face of the whole country, and insolently claim the tenth of all the produce of the industrious farmer, even to his fowls and to his chickens. There their rulers, arrogate to themselves dominion over the soul as well as the body, their laws and forms must be rigidly observed, even in violation of conscience

itself. The arbitrary act of religious persecution, not long ago exhibited in one of these countries, cannot yet be forgotten, where a poor man was committed to prison for life for refusing to swear in a court of justice, though he offered to affirm, but was afterwards under the necessity, in order to save a small family from starving, to comply with the law, and to swear contrary to his conscience.\*

Another excellence of Liberty is the freedom of the press. Here every person entrusted with power may be brought before the great tribunal of the people; his whole conduct, measures, and sentiments tried by the principles of the constitution; his imbecility, villany, or corruption, arraigned and exposed to the world, provided nothing is asserted but what can be substantiated by facts. This, gentlemen, is a most valuable privilege; it may be called the very right arm, the grand watch-tower, the most formidable bastion of liberty, from whence, and by which, the true patriot can guard against every open or insidious approach, and repel, with success, every daring attack on the liberties of this country.

These are some of the innumerable blessings of liberty, for the attainment and preservation of which so much blood has been shed—so many dangers defied—and such prodigies of valour performed as have astonished the world. This is the glorious object that filled and animated the hearts of that illustrious train of heroes who fell on your ravished fields and bloody fortresses, fighting for the liberties of their country. Heroes whom no corruption could seduce, nor toil discourage, nor dangers, nor death itself terrify! Faithful to the standard of Liberty, she has now surrounded their brows with immortal honours. Their names will live in the hearts, and breathe with ardour from the lips of Americans, while sun and moon endureth; and future ages shall shed tears of triumphant joy and honest pride over the history of their immortal achievements. This is the charm that has continued to draw such multitudes from almost every nation in Europe to this our land of liberty—to more abundant shores and a happier home.

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\* See the Trial of Thomas Muir.

This is the power that in little more than a century has made cities, fields, arts and science flourish and spring up from a howling wilderness ; and, with a rapidity of population unexampled in the history of mankind, has, from a few scattered adventurers, made us a great, powerful, and independent nation. Indeed, what is there in human life pleasing or desirable that we owe not, under Providence, to liberty ? Is the protection of property a blessing ? She guards with a jealous, but impartial eye, the rich man's millions, with the poor man's mite. Is the free worship of God, the pouring out our hearts to Him in such way and manner as conscience may dictate, a blessing ? She beholds with a sacred reverence, with an unbounded charity, the various devotions of every sect—prefers not one above another—believes in the piety and sincerity of all, nor suffers any human being to dare to intrude between God and His creature. Is the advantage of education a blessing ? She opens and establishes seminaries of learning—promotes and protects the liberty of the press—and holds out to all the greatest incitements to virtue and learning, by asking no other qualifications for places of the highest trust than talents and sound principles. Is national peace a distinguished blessing ? She pursues not schemes of conquest or aggrandizement, those sources of long and bloody wars and national misery, but with the integrity, firmness, and impartial policy of an honest individual, deals justly, openly, and equally with all. In a word, liberty unites and consolidates the whole powers, moral and physical, of society, by making the public will and the public good the great rule of her conduct, and the object of all her proceedings.

Such, gentlemen, is the nature and value of liberty. May its benovolent principles animate every bosom ! May its friends, wherever situated, be for ever victorious ? May its enemies in every country be effectually converted, or covered with everlasting shame and confusion ; and soon may that great millennium arrive when the mighty genius of liberty, standing on the earth and ocean of this vast globe, the abode of such innumerable millions, shall breathe out the solemn and determined vow of the whole human race, that tyranny shall be no longer !

To promote this great event, which, according to the whole tenor

of sacred prophecy, and, indeed, from present appearances, seems fast approaching, you, gentlemen, and your fellow-citizens, as freemen, and as Americans, are to be made no unconcerned spectators. Hitherto you have acted a most distinguished part in this grand effort of mankind to rescue themselves from tyranny. First in the glorious career of nations you have shown what liberty can do. Your example and your unparalleled prosperity has aroused and animated distant nations. On you, and on this your great fabric of liberty, are the eyes of every people on earth directed. On your success in this grand experiment of representative government, on your established greatness and rising glory, the destinies of mankind, the liberties of the world, are suspended. You have acquired, it is now your great business to preserve and perpetuate ] to posterity this invaluable treasure.

What would you think of that farmer who should bestow the greatest labour in cultivating his fields, and yet pay no regard to his fences—take no pains to prevent the inroads and destruction made among his harvests? what would you think of the inhabitants of that city, who, though in continual danger of being attacked by a cruel enemy, should yet let their gates stand open, and their walls go to ruin? Liberty, is this strong fence, that protects and secures to you the fruits of your labour. Liberty is that wall, those gates and ramparts, that surround and defend you from the merciless fury of Tyranny, who for ever raves around them, bellowing for entrance, and thirsting for blood. It is, therefore, your deepest interest, as well as duty, to be vigilant and watchful of the motions and designs of this prowling enemy of your peace, your prosperity, religion, and happiness. Acquaint yourselves minutely with the true principles of liberty, on which the different State governments, and your great federal compact is founded. Read books of authentic history and travels. They will inform you of the fatal consequences of the loss of liberty to the different nations of the world. Contrast the want and wretchedness experienced by your fellow-creatures in other countries, with the peace, plenty and felicity you enjoy in this. Remember, that for all these, under Providence, you are indebted to liberty, —infuse these ideas into your children. Cultivate their minds,

and enlarge their understanding by education and reading. Set before them, in your own persons, examples of firm patriotism and genuine piety. Inure them to habits of industry, economy and virtue, love of country, and gratitude to the Great Giver of all good. Then may the storms of aristocracy roar, and the fury of foreign or domestic enemies swell and rage around you. Your liberty, founded on this immovable rock, its structure adorned, and its energy directed by that incorruptible Republican, who on this ever-memorable day, has ascended into the chair of State, shall roll back all their meditated mischief on their own heads, and your country rise in strength, grandeur, and prosperity—the seat of learning and of arts—the abode of plenty and of peace—the asylum of the persecuted, and the pride and glory of the world. Is this hope great and elevating? Who, then, that so lately beheld the surrounding glooms of aristocracy descending in dismal darkness, and threatening to blast and bury for ever from our view this glorious prospect—what republican I say, who eyed with a throbbing and indignant heart, the evil genius of despotism breaking into this our western paradise, to plunge us into a world of woe, but feels now a flood of joy swell his overflowing heart on this triumphant day, at the defeat and expulsion of this arch-fiend, and the universal overthrow of his fallen associates. The majesty of the people arose, and their enemies were hurled to the regions of despair and ignominy. The clouds are now dispersing, the prospect brightens with more splendour than ever, and every patriotic heart welcomes this happy era.













